MEN

No. 3

Welcome to the third issue of MEN. The articles in this issue reflect the considerable progress that we have made during the past period of time. Congratulations to us all. We want to hear from you. Send your thoughts, poems, articles, and art work to me.

Love,
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MEN RECLAIMING POWER AND LEADING

excerpt from Saturday Morning at the Pine Barrens Men's Workshop, October 12-14, 1984

—HARVEY JACKINS

THE ROLE OF MEN IN RC

We're here as *men*. We have around us a world full of promise as well as tottering on the brink of terrible danger. We have around us a community of Co-Counselors that is moving forward very well these days. A decisive change, predicted about a year ago, is taking place. Our geographical Communities are stabilizing currently to a degree we've never seen before.

For a long while the typical Organized Area of RC got to a certain size and then stopped growing. (It may have collapsed repeatedly on the way there, but it always re-flourished. I don't think we've ever been able to collapse a Community permanently. Somebody still remembers that one good session and keeps trying to raise his or her head and start Co-Counseling over again.) When an Area got to a certain size and then stagnated, it was "comfortable." I don't yet know what all the reasons were. We keep looking at this. The continual growth that RC has had was largely a function of starting new Communities.

What's different at the present time is that the existing Communities are tending to grow and divide. In the last six weeks I've been asked to approve something like fifteen new Areas. That's quite different. New Areas are being made out of old Areas. Something is happening here.

I know about a hundred people in RC who have "got it made." Everything that they had hoped to attain when they started counseling has been attained. They've got the jobs they want, they have all the money they want, the families are thriving, the family relationships are good, all the goals that they once set are reached. They've integrated RC enough into their work and thinking that they solve problems as they progress.

I got a glimpse of that myself this spring when I made some visits to the beginning Communities in Asia and Africa. I worked in nine countries in many different situations and was presented with hatfuls of problems wherever I went. I solved them all. I actually got a glimpse that I am largely re-emerged and came home feeling pretty good about myself.

Co-Counseling has functioned this well for this number of people. There are also probably a couple of thousand secondary leaders who are also functioning very well. The stability of the leadership in many places is very different than it was a short time ago, very different. If somebody decides they want to resign a role for a year, they have somebody else all trained and ready to step in. There's a continuity. I don't have to run around stomping out brush fires very much anymore. Things are good.

TAKE PRIDE IN RC WOMEN

There is a meeting this weekend near Amsterdam. It is a tremendous world-wide concourse of women, most of whom are women RC leaders but a few of whom are non-RC leaders who have learned to respect RC and have been invited as guests. The power and clarity in this group of women is quite amazing. They are very, very impressive.

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Most of our leadership in the RC Community, the geographical Communities, is women and this is a boon to all of us. It's something that every one of us men can relax a little bit about and take some pride in. It has occurred partly because of the somewhat different conditioning of women in this oppressive society but it's occurred mostly, I think, because of a deliberate policy, which I am very proud of, of reaching to put women into leadership, giving them support out of the patterns of sexist oppression, encouraging them to take roles that they have been denied by the society. I think we have been rewarded for this to an enormous degree.

It's also true that a lot of us, including most of the women at this point, are a little tired of the minority role of men in RC. It's time for a major shift and I think the shift is already under way. We don't have to start this change, we just have to encourage it and take it farther.

CONFUSION ABOUT MEN'S OPPRESSION

What position are we in? *As men,* we have been very badly hurt by vicious oppression. It's been two years now since we are able to say clearly that men *are* oppressed, men *are an oppressed group* in this society. We had been confused. It's taken us a while longer to get to a clear picture of men's oppression than it did to see the women's oppression. The women's oppression was open and blatant while men's oppression has been concealed, often as a privilege or something like that.

Our confusion is like that of German or English RCers when they begin to try to think about liberation issues. They start feeling guilty about what English rulers have done to the Welsh and Scots and Irish and other colonized peoples. But it doesn't occur to them for a long while that *they* are oppressed. The fact is that the German people have never been free. The English people have never been free. They have been told that they're free because they have been used to oppress others but they've never had freedom themselves. They have to make a start toward German liberation and English liberation from the bottom of a big pit of confusion because they've been abused all the time they've existed as people by oppressors and oppressive societies that have lied to them about their so-called privileges.

We men are very much in that kind of position. We've been told that we are a privileged group. We've been told that we are powerful, that we are masters. The actual reality is that we've been treated badly at every level.

This is true with no exceptions. We're clear now that the oppression is not a case of bad guys ripping off the good guys. In this oppressive society there are no real beneficiaries. The richest, meanest, most arrogant, dictatorial capitalist in the whole society has been cruelly hurt and robbed by the operation of the society which, supposedly, has given him all these advantages. His humanness had to be terribly damaged as a small boy or he would never play the role that he does. We men are all, in every case, terribly victimized by the society and this includes the people that seem to be doing the victimizing. They get no real, human advantage out of it at all.

The oppression is basically economic oppression. All the other oppressions were invented in order to divide the huge majority of people who are working class. We workers have been divided from each other on race lines and sex lines and age lines and dozens of other lines, but a lot of the division has been on pseudo-class lines. Great sections of the working class are deceived and bribed with very, very trivial bribes to believe that they are not working class, that they are "white collar" or "professional" or "managerial" or "independent entrepreneurs."

Almost everybody in this society is a member of the working class. They sell their labor in return for part of the value they produce with that labor which they receive as wages or salaries or bonuses or stock options or whatever. We've been deceived and bribed to think that we're not working class. Generally only the blue-collar section of the working class tends to have much spontaneous clarity about the facts of oppression. The rest of us are doing little dances of self-delusion about how we're "privileged" or "fortunate" or "successful" or "different." The benefits which are actually given to divide us from our brothers are trifling compared to what a real free life could be like, or even compared to the economic benefits we would have in a society that could function without the contradictions of capitalism and its recurrent crises.

AGAINST INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

What's the situation with men? We've been given the illusion of power and it's made us passive about reaching for real power. Now, women, if you offer them the women's commitment, for example, generally get a light in their eyes. We've had a difficult time working out a men's commitment, at least I have. I've written brilliant commitments for all kinds of groups of which I'm not a member, but when I've tried to work out a men's commitment or a working-class commitment, they've tended to come out two and three pages long. There have been several attempts to write a men's commitment and they've elicited many other suggestions. On the plane yesterday, I tried to incorporate them in this:

> **I promise that, from this moment on, I will be proud to be male and will seek closeness and brotherhood with every other man of every age, race, nation, and class.**
>
> **I will work to restore enough safety to all men for us to discharge the cruel hurts that have been put upon us.**
>
> **I will fight to end and eliminate the burdening of men with over-fatigue, over-responsibility, and coercion into armed service where we have been brutalized and made to kill or be killed.**
>
> **I will interrupt any slandering or disrespect or blaming of any man for the hurts which have been placed upon him.**
>
> **I will cherish my birthright of being a good, intelligent, courageous, and powerful male human.**

I think most of the contradictions to the internalized oppression are in there.

We now have all this knowledge. It's in print. We read it, get excited, and then tend to forget it as the patterned fuzz drifts back in. One has to continually read and re-read and re-read and re-read the essential knowledge of RC because it's so anti-pattern. The patterns resurge to make us forget it or confuse it very quickly. It's necessary to resort to rote memorizing some of this knowledge. The three basic functions of the counselor, for example, need to be memorized or you're going to drift away from them in session when you are the counselor.

The current situation requires that some humans quickly take their power back. This oppressive society is so mad, so complex, so over-armed to the teeth, so dangerous to everything that for the world's survival somebody simply must break through soon to reclaim his or her full power.

We've gotten back some pride. We've partly gotten back our ability to discharge, although as men we still have a big struggle with that.

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The key feature of our oppression as men was to take away our freedom to discharge, our ability to heal ourselves, to lock it away from us as a prerequisite for our being considered "manly." As men we were told men had to be "controlled."

TAKE BACK OUR POWER

We may not have time to become completely free from every distress before we act powerfully. The Community committed itself three years ago to eliminating nuclear weapons. We included that as part of our basic one-point program—to reclaim our intelligence and help others to do the same—and we proposed, I think correctly, that this required eliminating nuclear weapons, otherwise we might not have time to reclaim our intelligence. We must deal with this issue.

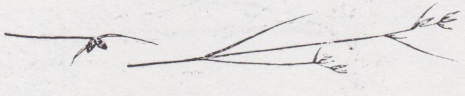
The RC Communities, in general, have been very fine about responding to this. RCers have played a good role in the swelling tide of anti-nuclear-arms sentiment.

No one has yet fully reclaimed their power. We have come close. We have many indications that the basic attitude of power is an inherent thing, that it isn't something you have to manufacture. All of us were conceived and most of us were born expecting the universe to be responsive to our wishes.

When we see some of the infants with RC parents, for example, this opinion is corroborated. Occasionally we see children who have been given good enough attention that they persist in being powerful. I have heard Tim tell about the children who started as pre-schoolers at the Palo Alto School. He has said that if they've had a few years there, when they go into the public schools and meet the pressures there, their confidence is permanent. The child who has had very much time in the Palo Alto School cannot be intimidated. Such a small child in the public schools faces a bombastic principal, who's determined to require conformity. The principal barks and intimidates in the familiar way which was done to him when he was a child, to threaten into submission. The little Palo Alto graduate looks him in the eye steadily. The principal goes into more, louder bombast and stamps his foot and waves his arms. He gets looked in the eye steadily and after a while he drops his shoulders and creeps away. This is another little indication we have that power is inherent. The recovery of power does not require transcending and becoming a new type of person but simply requires getting rid of the powerlessness distress which has been placed upon us. If powerlessness is just a distress pattern, we should know how to deal with that.

The agenda before us is to reclaim our power. This may be a little more confusing for us than for the women but also, I think, a little easier. As I work consistently with women leaders trying to bring them up to their full power, I am often deeply saddened at the heavy, heavy layers of invalidation and abuse that have been put upon them because they are female. It's one of the world's great wrongs. It's a little harder for me to see such layers on men, I suppose because they're acting upon me from inside to some extent, but there is no question that the hurts are equally deep. We've been treated at least as cruelly *and* more confusedly. It's a little hard for us to think of actual power because we're so used to the trappings of pseudo-power. The boys go to the head of the line, the boys get to do the interesting things. We've been told this discrimination is a privilege. It's been confusing.

It's time for us to begin to reclaim our power and it's going to be a little easier for us though, perhaps, more confusing, than it is for the women. I think at this point, in RC, it's time for a great men's movement. It's already beginning. More and more men are becoming Area Reference People, for example. There are six men out of forty-five on the Regional Reference Persons' level, but these six exert a great deal of leadership. They are pretty good men. There are a lot of men that need to come up to leading, in the first place to leading men.



GIVE AND REQUIRE RESPECT

I don't think we'll any more tolerate the abuse that we have endured in RC, sometimes, from ideologies that have temporarily been brought in from the non-RC women's movement. At this point we have lots of allies. Thousands of women leaders in RC are now viewing men's liberation as their concern. They were tired of not having enough men operating on their level for them to relate to. They are going to be supporting us all the way. The situation is much different than it was a few years ago, when often, if you ventured to speak up for men you got called a "male chauvinist pig" about the second sentence. RC women have gotten warm, intelligent support from some of us and the investment we've made in supporting women is, I think, going to come back to us at this point. There's enough clarity. The situation is very favorable.

CONTINUALLY REFRESH THE BASICS

What's holding us up is mostly our still low level of counseling and understanding what counseling is all about. The clarification of the basics of counseling that's taken place in the last couple of years is worth repeating here. Our good old Manual was a fine cookbook and it will still be treasured as a cookbook, but we can now say exactly what to do *in every situation* when we are a counselor.

Helping the client discharge is not all there is to counseling, but it is 95% of it. Certainly with a male client, because of the blocks on discharge we've had to confront, 98% of counseling is helping the male client to discharge.

What does a counselor need to do in order to help a client discharge? Very simply, three things:

1. **Pay enough attention to the client to see *clearly* what the distresses are.**
2. ***Think* of all the possible ways to contradict that distress.**
3. **Contradict the distress *sufficiently*. The client will always discharge.**

It's that simple. When you come to apply it, however, we run into our own confusion. So, first of all, let's learn this well. Let's learn that much by rote.

(REPEATS THE THREE STEPS AND HAS THE WORKSHOP REPEAT THEM AFTER HIM.)

In the first step the key word is "clearly." See *clearly* what the client's distresses are. Blind guessing doesn't work. Thinking you know what the client's distresses are because you "feel" them so keenly yourself doesn't work. When this happens, you're projecting your own distresses onto the client. That's probably the second most common mistake.

I have an analogy for that mistake from a story I read that may help you. A mother took her twin sons shopping to buy a present for daddy. She told them how much they could spend and made suggestions about shirts, ties, and socks,which they rejected. They raced through the deparmtent store looking at this, looking at that, coming back to check with her occasionally but dissatisfied. She waited. Finally they came racing back together in great excitement. They were perfectly agreed. They'd found just the right present for daddy—two cowboy suits. Check in your counseling that you're not buying cowboy suits for your client.

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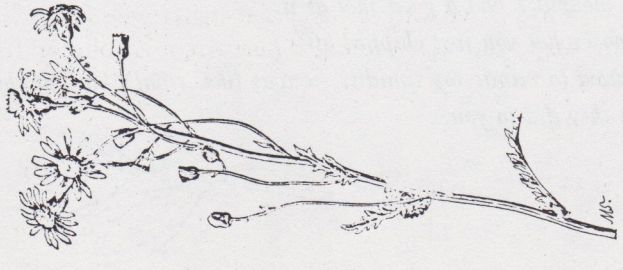

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The key word in the second step is "think." *Think* of all possible ways to contradict the distress.

The key word in the third step is "sufficiently." If you've done the first two steps and you're doing the third and the client is not discharging, it does not mean you should abandon RC and start using psychoanalysis or go join an ashram or something like that. It means you have not contradicted the distress sufficiently. Errors have been very common on each of these three steps, but being faint-hearted or at a loss or bringing the counselor's timidities into the session so he or she doesn't contradict the client's distress *sufficiently* has been very, very common.

I'd like each of you to move toward the reclaiming of your power. This is the activity that we have least experience with, but this is very much on the agenda for men as we move to exert our full influence in the RC geographical Communities, in the wide world, and in the building of great Wygelian communities of men, where we will include in our Wygelian leaders' groups and in our men's support groups men of influence in the wide world. It's up to us to reach the generals and the presidents of the multi-national corporations. They are almost always men, and if we start thinking of them as brothers who've gotten trapped in these ridiculous places, I think that we can be quickly influential in ways that may well save the world from burning up. It's going to take some confidence, it's going to take some power, in order to do this.

COUNSELING AWAY POWERLESSNESS

I'd like to try a demonstration on reclaiming one's full power. Any volunteers? Let me see some hands.

HJ: Okay, we've never worked, have we? Come on. What's your name?

D: D.

HJ: Okay. You've got a certain amount of physique, right?

D: Right.

HJ: They've grown you up pretty high.

D: I wish that was all it took.

HJ: Oh, you've got the rest of it too. You've had a fair education?

D: Yes.

HJ: What is it that you do?

D: I'm a lawyer.

HJ: You had to work a little bit to get there. You've got allies? Oh, you're G's husband! You've got good allies.

HJ: Now, tone of voice is an important tool against distress, simply because it's not usually been paid any attention to. So, I'm going to ask you to try for a full *tone of voice, and I'll just give you one word to start out with and we'll work from there. I want you to say to these people, in this tone and with this sort of posture (he stands proud and in a growly, powerful voice, says), "POWER!" (Client and all laugh.) The pattern is quick to counter-attack.*

D: Give me a chance to work up to it, will you?

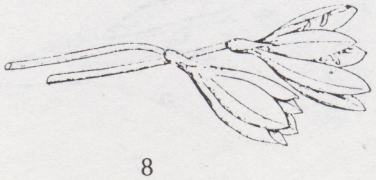
HJ: No. One mad leap. (Client cries.) Let 'er come. It's just as hard as you feel it is. (Client discharges for some minutes.)

D: You know, I thought I had a good shot at it.

HJ: You did. Look what you just chipped off.

D: When you started to mimic my timidity, it was like...that's kind of chronic stuff....

HJ: That's what they did to you.



D: It's like, if you don't do that, I could do it! I could do it! I could do it! (Much discharge) I was just so small when it started.

HJ: That's when it was always done. They catch us before we get our wind or they'd never get us.

D: I'm ready to try.

HJ: I like what you were saying before. You said, "I can do it!" You were threatening me powerfully there.

D: I can do it. (Discharge)

(Demonstration continues with client discharging while saying "Power." Later Harvey changes to use of the "Women's" commitment in the demonstration. It works well.)

Who else would like to try? C?

HJ: You know what I want from you, don't you? Not just now, but all the time?

C: I think so.

HJ: Okay. I'll give you one very simple direction. You have a pretty good powerful voice already, but the word is "YES."

C: In that tone?

HJ: I'll let you find your own tone. (Client starts discharging by shaking and crying and yawning without saying the word.)

C: It's remembering to do this for me that makes it work.

HJ: Of course. I'll be pleased but that's just incidental. The direction is all you've ever needed. Incidentally, I have complete confidence in you.

C: I know that.

HJ: It's just a simple, three-letter word.

(Demonstration continues with much discharge and client thinking "YES" and occasionally saying, "For me!")

HJ: I'm trying to get some variety in here. B, how about you? With C I relied on some things that weren't obvious but that I know from working with him before. (If that's confusing to anybody.) With D I didn't know, and I don't know much about B.

B: What would you like to know?

HJ: Whatever you will reveal as you say the word "Everything."

B: Everything! Everything! I want it all.

HJ: You want it, or are you going to have it?

B: I don't believe I can have it.

(Demonstration continues with discharge, client saying, "She didn't believe I could have it.")

Well, those were three fairly nice samples. Each one of us deserves to feel enormously good about ourselves, to have enormous confidence and enormous power. The evidence is that we've survived. Each one of us deserves to feel enormously good in that we've survived what's been done to us. It's no wonder that we occlude much of our lives because what has been done to us has been so awful that it doesn't bear looking at except in very supportive circumstances. I think probably everybody here resonated to at least one of those three demonstrations, if not to all of them.

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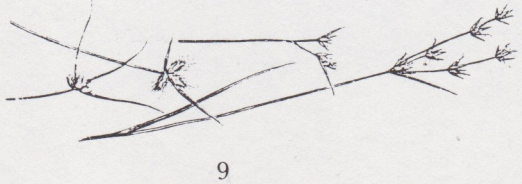

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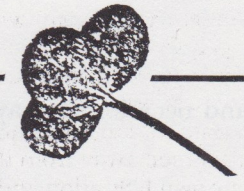
ALL IS WELL

We are fine. We are marvelous. Our power is inherent. There's only a little mud and dust over it that we can discharge away. Our goodness is true and deep. All the things we've reproached ourselves for are just wounds that somebody else put on us. All the lust and meanness and timidity and disappointment that we have felt so guilty about and so ashamed of hasn't anything to do with us. It's just mud somebody threw at us. We're just fine and we always have been.

We're men. We're MEN! It was a facsimile of this reality, of course, that the Victorians used to speak of when they said, "Manhood's high estate," but we reached it. All of us here, of whatever age, have come to manhood's high estate. We've just got a little cleaning up to do, a little vacuuming of each other in the spots that we can't reach alone. That's the real situation.

You men here are in lots of different places with lots of different things to work on, but I would recommend that you try to inject a little bit of reclaiming your power into all your work. This powerlessness, I think, is the unidentified load, the difficulty that has not been challenged enough until now. This powerlessness is the invisible burden that we carry. There is the assumption that we have to conform, that we have to pretend to be brave or even pretend to be powerful when we're hurting like hell inside. Let's try to reach for our real power, for our total goodness, for the fact that the world is right there waiting for us to take charge. We've been trained not to reach for this. That's the main difficulty. We're living in a hidden agony of fear that if we reach out for what's obviously within our grasp, somebody will slap us down. Well, nobody's got a hand big enough to slap us down anymore. We are, at this point, armed. We've got the answers to the last bit of confusion about "What makes me act so funny?", the riddle of the pattern. We can't individually see our own, but, of course, we can see each other's with great ease. Things are good.



DRAFT COMMITMENT FOR MEN

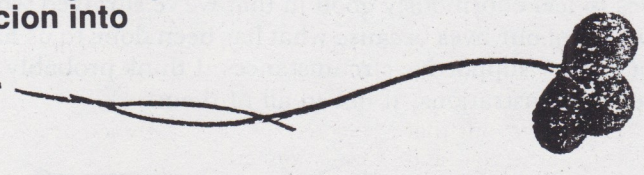
I promise that from this moment on I will be proud to be male, and will seek closeness and brotherhood with every other man of every age, race, nation, and class.

I will seek to restore safety to all men to discharge the cruel hurts that have been put upon us.

I will fight to end and eliminate the burdening of men with over-fatigue, over-responsibility, and coercion into armed service where we have been brutalized and made to kill or be killed.

I will permit no slandering or disrespect or blaming of any man for the hurts which have been placed upon him.

I will cherish my birthright of being a good, intelligent, courageous, and powerful male human.



MEN THINKING ABOUT MEN AS A PRIORITY

In reviewing the proposed commitment for men, "I promise that, from this moment on, I will take pride in being male, I will use my strength always against every oppression, I will respect all women and young people, and I will cherish and seek brotherhood with my fellow men," several concerns came to mind that I would like to discuss within the context of men's liberation.

First of all, men's liberation must be based on and grow from the premise that it will immensely benefit men, individually and collectively, to move out of pattern and recover their full humanness and power. Men need to move out of their own oppression and cease oppressing others primarily because it is in the self-interest of men to do this. To try to clean up our patterns so we won't oppress or "hurt" women and children means we are essentially liberating ourselves for someone else and not basing our liberation on the reality that as wonderful, loving human beings we deserve liberation for ourselves. In other words, men must base our liberation on the premise that we as men are worth it because we are good people and deserve it and not to restrain our patterns in order to avoid oppressing and hurting others.

This in no way implies that the ending of male patterns that oppress and hurt women and young people as well as men is not a crucial and indispensible part of male liberation. Men cannot liberate themselves, individually or collectively, until they can stop acting on sexist, adultist, violent, and destructive patterns. The problem with the commitment, which epitomizes much of the flavor and focus of male liberation inside and outside of RC, is the emphasis on restraining men from hurting others and a negative preoccupation with what's wrong with men. This type of approach plays into male internalized oppression that men can't be trusted, are dangerous, inhuman, and hopeless. It needs to be pointed out that men feel bad about themselves and other men. The things women and young people can't stand about men are the same things men can't stand about other men. Approaches to male liberation that are based on restraining or controlling male patterns ultimately lead to hopelessness and despair.

What is needed is a direction that contradicts the internalized and externalized oppression of men. We need to understand that men must first be terribly crushed, humiliated, abused, beat up, invalidated, sexually molested, used, and exploited before the distress is internalized sufficiently for the destructive dramatizing of male patterns. These early hurts are reinforced by the external oppression of society and the interaction of internalized oppression patterns of men and women. In order to contradict this internalized oppression two approaches are needed.

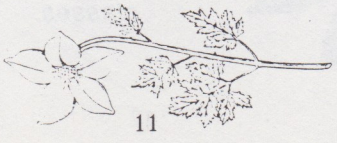
First, we need to start becoming more aware of how good men are, how well they are doing, and how much they are growing. Men are continually supporting women and young people, bestowing love, nurturing the environment, and resisting oppression. Whether it's the shipyard worker putting in overtime so his children can go to college, a lawyer filing a lawsuit to stop environmental degradation, or a peasant in Central America taking up arms to overthrow an oppressive government, men continually act with decency, integrity, love, tenderness, and sensitivity. The history of men (which I believe needs to be told) would reveal, despite massive and deep oppression and subsequent acting out of the oppression, an irrepressible force that sooner or later reaches the correct position and does the right thing. What I am suggesting here is that first we have to find out what's "right" with men before we try to deal with what's "wrong" with men. Certainly the picture of men as violent, oppressive creatures out of touch with themselves and their feelings and emotionally dependent on women needs to be re-examined.

In addition, men need to trust themselves and women need to trust men. This is not a call to naively assume that there aren't some nasty patterns out there, but rather a call for faith in the inherent goodness of men. A major part of male oppression is to develop sets of external behaviors to accomplish some goal or survive in an oppressive society, while simultaneously losing touch with ourselves. The oppression forces men to externalize in order to survive. We learn to become good scholars, machinists, soldiers, husbands, fathers, lovers, teachers, and even allies. We learn to be everything but ourselves. In trying to deal with sexism, men all too often externalize and learn a set of non-sexist behaviors.

What I am proposing here is that men take the position that by trusting themselves and being themselves they naturally will do the correct thing and arrive at the correct conclusions. Men need to rediscover themselves and begin to think about male liberation and sexism on our own initiative and independently of what women and young people think. It is crucial that men listen to what they have to say with the utmost respect, attention, and consideration. But the lack of trust has led men away from thinking about our own liberation and patterns and into uncritically accepting whatever women have said and then attempting to develop the appropriate external behaviors.

Ultimately, for male liberation to occur, men must refocus on what's good about men, formulate our own thinking, rediscover who we are as individuals and trust both ourselves and other men. While again it is crucial and indispensible that we listen with great regard and respect to women and young people and also relentlessly support their liberation, in the long-range both men and women must have trust, faith, and confidence in men that men can take charge of their liberation.

Dewey Bandy
San Diego, California, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 53



Celebrate Men

Since the workshop at Hummingbird, I've been sessioning and thinking about men's issues and the men's commitment. The version in **Present Time No. 54** was a great improvement, but still did not bring much discharge for me. The following commitment evolved in a recent session and brought substantial discharge from me, especially when followed by statements of specific implications.

> *I celebrate my completeness as a man, always supported by my fellow men. I delight in the love and strength that continually flow from me, making this universe a peaceful home for me and my family of allies.*

This commitment (if it can be called that, since it departs from the "I promise" format) was arrived at intuitively in a counseling session in response to my specific distress, but after noticing the crying and trembling I proceeded with the following analysis using three identified areas of male oppression as guides.

1. The tone of celebration and delight contradicts the oppressive sense of needing to assume *crushing responsibility* in order to prove worth. Doing lots of promising seems to collude with this internalized compulsive responsibility. Male goodness is assumed to be inherent in this version; love and strength occur spontaneously, not as a result of promises to be a good boy.

2. The oppression of men being *alienated from the healing discharge process* is contradicted by the word "completeness," which implies being whole emotionally as well as intellectually and also implies being skilled at intuitive logic as well as at carefully-checked-out logic.

3. The societal training of men to be *objects and perpetrators of violence* is contradicted by the phrase "always supported by my fellow men." This seems to be a more accurate contradiction than promising to support other men, which can be done without trusting them. Whereas one must trust another to count on him for support. Also the internalized image of latent violence is countered by the phrase, "peaceful home for me and my family of allies."

Well, it works for me and seems to check out. What do you think?

Tom Hickey and I have been exchanging letters twice a month since Hummingbird. It's great to have a regular exchange with another man who loves this theory as much as I do.

David Ritchey
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

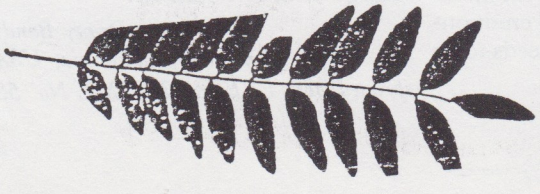
From Israel

From this moment on, I will easily respect any man and take total delight in him. From this moment on I will easily use my thinking, my sense of responsibility, and my feelings amongst all people and in all situations.

Bob Goodliffe
Jerusalem, Israel
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56

I sincerely promise that from now on the presence of my fellow males will bring me comfort, joy, and warmth and will continually work to bring us ever closer.

Gadi Margol
Jerusalem, Israel
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56



CALIFORNIA AND D.C.

I have been reading and enjoying PRESENT TIME for eleven years. It wasn't until I read Dewey Bandy's article "Choosing A Men's Commitment" that I was moved to write a letter of appreciation.

When I meet Dewey Bandy I am going to hug him and let him hear how proud I am of him (and me) after reading his bold, brave, and thoughtful article.

I cried with pride for my fellow men. I cheered when he reminded us that both men and women must have faith, trust, and confidence in men and that men can and are taking charge of their own freedom.

Jack O'Conner
San Francisco, California, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 55

The men's commitment is coming along well. I think most of the commitments need to be pared down. I'd like to see a move in the direction of "men are magnificent," not just good. I feel like I model magnificence pretty well sometimes and men keep beating down the doors to get into my classes.

Ed Rejuney
Washington, DC, USA

PRIDE IN BEING MALE

The men's commitment has provoked great discussion and thinking in the area of male oppression at workshops, classes, and sessions. In my men's group, for instance, men are writing versions of the men's commitment and are taking a personal interest in creating one which is effective and to the point.

An effective men's commitment and policy is important at this time because the reactionary oppressive powers in societies over the world are calling upon men through coercion, misinformation, and confusion to compete against one another and to take up traditional roles of oppressive behavior. Particularly in the United States there is great misinformation about heroism, patriotism, and the practicality of traditional male roles in the present society. This is an attempt to confuse and divide men who are attempting to find pride and clear-thinking about themselves.

This is my latest draft of a men's commitment:

As a shining example to all my brothers, I promise that from this moment forth I take pleasure and total pride in being male. I recognize the humanness that exists in all men that I meet and the availability of closeness, safety, caring, love, and trust that exists there. In the face of heavy conditioning to be inhuman, I persist in being kind, thoughtful, and unique.

All the commitments of oppressed groups in society that have been written are for groups which are oppressed in their relationship to another group. For instance, women may be oppressed when relating to men and are in male-dominated organizations. Children are oppressed when they come into contact with adult patterns.

In the case of men, though, it is different because men are oppressed by a system of behavior which is defined and enforced by men regarding the definition and expectations of being "a man." At times, women and children participate in this male oppression but are not part of an oppressor group who systematically victimize men.

In addition, it is important that the commitment not be phrased as "I will," "I shall," etc. because it starts to sound like a duty, chore, or responsibility which is similar to other expectations unthoughtfully put on men in an oppressive manner. I intended the commitment to be very personal to the person who is using it.

A commitment needs to contradict the internalized oppression and powerlessness of a particular group enough that a member of that group can discharge while reading or hearing it. It contains the reality of the human being it is addressing, behind the patterns of oppression that he/she has internalized. It is not meant to give the whole picture of that group, historically and at present. For that we have policy statements. So, in terms of a men's commitment, it can not state all the clear information we have about men (e.g., men have stood up against all oppressions and have been allies to each and every oppressed group); this is why we have and need to expand and improve the men's policy statement. The men's commitment can simply and above all be the guide for each man out of male oppression—discharging all the way out.

Nick Gervay
Beverly Hills, California, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 55

Proud Traditions

I wanted to let you know that I have been working on a new men's commitment. I've used it in sessions, men's support group, and regular class. I've been very enthused about the discharge and clarity that it has brought. To use your words, the commitment really "bites" for me. It has been pushing me on my personal life and I sense an accelerated growth for me. It feels terrible, but it is having a profound effect.

Here it is:

I cheerfully promise to be totally proud of the ancient tradition of being male, to respect all women and young people, and to never again allow anything wrong.

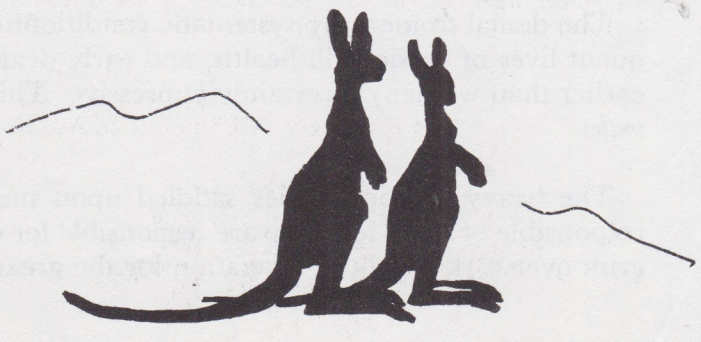
I hope you enjoy and can use this. It has had good effect with the other men in the men's group who have tried it out. The pride part seems to bring the greatest discharge for everyone. The word "tradition" somehow takes men out of the present "muck" and harkens to a nobler time when pride was basic; the idea of not allowing wrong to continue seems to also be a big stretch out of the numbness.

John Ketzer
Maumee, Ohio, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56

SUGGESTION FOR MEN'S COMMITMENT

I sincerely promise that, from this moment on, I will take pleasure and pride in being male. Keeping always in mind how magnificent men are in spite of heavy conditioning to be inhuman, I will take full delight in my strength knowing that I can easily support all women and young people as well as cherish and find an ally in every man, under all conditions.

Eitman Colman
Pech Luna, France
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56



ON THE OPPRESSION OF MEN

At a very large men's workshop at Appel Farm, New Jersey, in October of 1982, some important clarifications of theory and policy were made that have not yet been widely communicated or emphasized and undoubtedly should be.

There was a further clarification of the question "Are men oppressed?" There were proposals for the organizing of Men's Communities on the Wygelian model. There was an asssumption of responsibility by RC men for reaching men in positions of power in the oppressive society through an understanding and sympathetic approach to the oppression and mistreatment which men in these positions have endured and do endure. It was proposed that these men in positions of oppressive authority should be seen by their fellow men as fellow oppressed rather than only seeing them in terms of their oppressive roles, as various liberation and protest movements have tended to do.

During the brief history of RC our policy at first denied that men were oppressed. This was a reaction to the initial indignation of men against women speaking out against sexist oppression and naming men as the agents of that oppression. This speaking out was not always done with tact and understanding, of course, but the reaction of the indignant men, that *they* were oppressed by *women*, was clearly inaccurate. So, as a measure to support the women, a policy was adopted that "men are not oppressed."

This was reluctantly accepted by most of the men in RC at that time, but their uneasiness with that policy continued. As men began to organize into support groups and discuss their situation a word was often heard that "it may not be oppression but it sure feels like it." Some note was taken of this and I wrote some theoretical articles saying that all men are oppressed (as young people, as working class, as members of oppressed racial or ethnic minorities, etc.) but that they are not oppressed *as men.* This was welcomed by men's support groups, but the uneasiness continued.

Part of the confusion in this period was the widespread assumption that if a group of people are oppressed, they must be oppressed by another group of people, as the "agents" of that oppression. Since this had been true in many cases, it was not questioned for a while.

Gradually we have come to the realization that the actual oppressor is always the oppressive society, and that this society plays the basic oppressor role, whether or not there are other groups of people serving as the agents of the oppression.

This was the background of the clarification at Appel Farm in October 1982. We concluded that *men are oppressed.*

The denial to men, by systematic conditioning, of their abilities to discharge and the consequent lives of tension, ill health, and early death (men die, on the average, about seven years earlier than women) is certainly oppressive. This conditioning is directed at men *because they are males.*

The heavy responsibilities saddled upon men by the culture, under which they must be responsible or must feel they are responsible for everything under all conditions, leads to lives of grim overwork and little relaxation for the great majority of men. This is certainly oppressive.

The oppressive society places upon men, because they are males, the responsibility to go to war, to kill and be killed without question, without discussion, without having any say about the matter at all. Although some women's groups in a mistaken notion of liberation have sought to be similarly "honored," it remains a distinctly male oppression. This is oppression of the cruelest sort.

Therefore, we concluded, *men are oppressed,* but in deference to the fears of some women that men will use this conclusion as an excuse to defend an oppressive male role in sexism, the final wording of the statement was "Men are oppressed, *but not by women or children."*

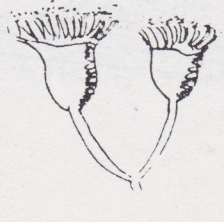
We concluded that the relatively small numbers of men in most Re-evaluation Counseling Communities is the result of an intolerant attitude held toward men by a significant segment of the women members and leaders of the present geographical Communities. We proposed that the mistaken policies of parts of the non-RC women's movement—of chronic antagonism toward men and blaming men, seeing them as *the* enemy rather than as potential allies—have been unawarely carried into our Communities. We agreed that it is easy in many of our Communities for men to feel that they're there on tolerance only.

To correct this, we ask the women leaders to critically re-examine their attitudes and for us men to say very clearly and sharply to the women that there are no "male chauvinist pigs," they are only, at worst, male human beings who, through no fault of their own, have been hurt badly and who tend sometimes, just as do all other humans, to pass these hurts on to others, but are, in fact, eager to be helped to become free of these hurts instead of rehearsing them at women.

We recommended to RC men that they continue to function in the geographical Communities, continue to support the women leadership well, to participate in leadership as fully and freely as we can, to congratulate the women on building such good Communities, but that, in addition to participating as fully as possible in the geographical Communities, we begin to organize Communities of men based on the Wygelian model.

This means that Men's Leaders' Groups should be organized in every city and Region. These will take responsibility for men's support groups and classes and other men's activities, but will also participate in and share leadership in wide-world men's organizations of all types, seeking to bring the theory and tools of RC to men generally. The Men's Communities would consist of the men who follow the policy and leadership of RC as expressed by the members of the Men's Leaders' Groups.

The men at the workshop recognized that the great majority of the dominant positions of power in the oppressive society, in the multi-national corporations, in the government, and in the armed forces are held by men. These men have been trained and conditioned to play oppressive roles. The workshop decided that we should view these men as our brothers, rather than as our enemies, facing clearly that they have been oppressed and mistreated and then moved into the other end of the oppression pattern as the only possible way that, as human males, they could be gotten to play these roles. We concluded that they are prisoners of the roles into which the oppressive society has forced them, and that they are necessarily awaiting release from these roles by the help of other men who would approach them as brothers, understand them, and assist them to discharge the patterns of oppression. We concluded we can help them to become the allies of all people, able to play a key role in ending the oppression in all its facets, and undoubtedly in preventing nuclear holocaust, an event which would otherwise effectively end all our efforts at every liberation.



—Harvey Jackins

THOUGHTS ON OPPRESSION

About two and a half years ago I began to think about men as oppressed. I was struck by the article on parents as an oppressed group and it seemed to me that men as a group are similar. Both men and parents are oppressed by society, not by a specific group.

It seems to me that our current society is oppressive to all people. It may not make sense to think of oppressors or even agents of oppression. When people act out their internalized oppression, we, rightly, don't say they are agents of the oppression. We don't judge them harshly for still having the effects of the oppression. I suspect that we would do well to have as generous an attitude to everyone. We have all been unwillingly hurt and pass on as little as we can.

All people, black and white, suffer from racism more severely than we yet realize. All people, male and female, suffer from sexism. We are just learning how the complement of every oppressed group is also hurt by the oppression. The hurt has different content and different effects, as it must to get each group to play its role.

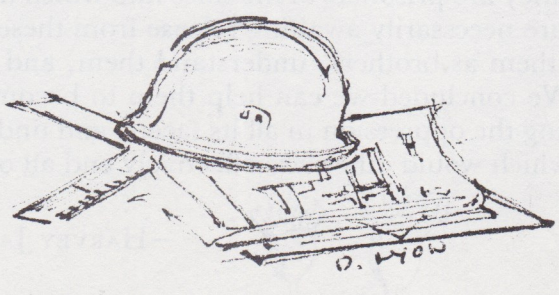
The work with men as oppressed, the work being done on eliminating racism, the work with owning-class people, all seem to be looking at how there are no beneficiaries of oppression, only victims. Being disappointed with the "oppressors" for still having the oppressive attitudes has not moved us far. We can have different attitudes in and outside of session.

I suspect we are holding on to the idea that someone is to blame for things having gone wrong. This is not the case. They couldn't have been any other way, or they would have. We evolved our societies under harsh conditions. They have improved steadily. Humans don't act irrationally if they can help it. Blaming people for having been hurt is one of the most pervasive ways we still dramatize our own hurts.

The work on eliminating racism shows that recognition of the hurt for whites is a powerful tool for opening people up for discharging their guilt and fears. This may unlock the rest of the attitudes that have been so slow to be eliminated.

I don't think we yet realize how bad the oppression has been for us all. We don't yet realize how good our lives can be.

John Irwin
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



THE OPPRESSION IS REAL

I read the first two issues of *Men* with great interest.

I disagree with one small point in the draft manifesto on our re-emergence. It says men are "suppressed but not oppressed." Of course our capacity to express ourselves (especially our gentler impulses) has been suppressed. What else? It seems hard for us to talk about our own oppression – maybe because we're men, right? We're supposed to control everything, especially if we're white, not too old or young, and heterosexual, healthy, middle-class, etc. Oppressed? Who, us?

I am a U.S. man, more or less all of the above (middle-class only by upbringing and attitudes). I have internalized a lot of the ways that my culture oppressed me. Here's a short list:

1. Oppression of our bodies:

- *** Circumcision (I wish I had my foreskin.)**
- *** Wars**
- *** (Other) hazardous occupations**
- *** Short life span – seven to eight years shorter than women's (U.S. average).**

Even though it's not possible to identify an oppressing class, these denials of our humanity are just as valid nasties as economic exploitation or political slavery. Mutilation, death, and stress are pretty basic forms of oppression.

2) Social oppression:

- *** Needing other people (mother, wife, restaurants) to provide food. (This one is easy to get out of, but quite a few men are still there.)**
- *** Having to take the initiative in relationships with women. (Even in a business acquaintanceship, who usually phones whom?)**
- *** For most men, lots of personalized rejection, especially in courtship. The notorious masculine ego is partly a response to this.**
- *** For nearly all heterosexual men, frustration in some or all of our life after puberty, because we are programmed to be much more interested in sex than women (regardless of our physiological needs, which differ tremendously); and women tend to ultimately control when and whether intercourse will happen.**
- *** Gay men's frustration and oppression seems harsher than mine, generally.**
- *** Unequal rights to parenting. (Traditionally, men have earned the family's living and thus have less time to be with their children. When a couple separates, the law assumes that children belong with their mother, even when the father would be a better parent.)**

In all these areas it's important to remember that women are not the enemy, even when they might act hurtfully. Like any other group – like us – they are following the programs which our society has imposed.

We are all changing. I think counseling can free up some energy for this, as well as show us ways to support each other in taking every slightest step toward a more fair world.

Bart Jones
Portland, Oregon, USA

Men Are Important, Our Lives Are Valuable

A policy needs to look at how men have been oppressed. Men don't have any perspective that they are important, that their lives have any value. All the talk about men has been to try to get them to stop being so awful. We need to be confident that men will, of course, throw their strength behind all other struggles for liberation. When, though, has it worked for a group to struggle for someone else's liberation without having addressed their own?

A policy needs to bring to general awareness the ways men are brought up and treated as adults. Men are attacked for showing feelings and then criticized for having trouble showing them as adults. A new perspective is needed for men. One that sees them as fully feeling, caring, intact human beings who have triumphed against great opposition to maintain some sense of themselves. Men struggle valiantly against their distresses to be human as much as they can figure out. They mostly do this alone.

They are faced with their internalized oppression with almost universal collusion by the society at large. The humanness of men is not seen behind their distresses. People don't notice their isolation from each other, their sense that they don't matter as individuals except to criticize them.

The society gives men a harsh picture of their place in the world—e.g., they are expendable in war, their role is to take care of the women and children. Women are too precious to risk in war; children are too precious, but adult males must play their role of protecting the species from extinction—protect the child-bearers. Only a few men need survive for the group to survive.

Men have often been cut off from the children who provide such a valuable reminder of their humanness. Many end up working in hostile, competitive environments, trying to get some kind of security for themselves and their families. It is no surprise they are in the habit of protecting themselves.

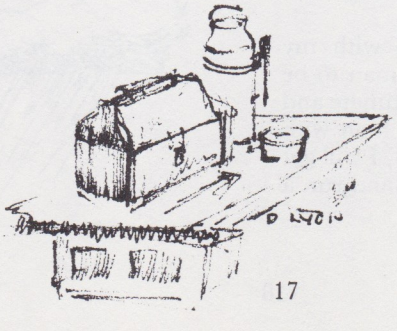
Men die from this oppression. They die earlier than women. The oppression kills them.

Men can discharge just fine. Their ability is intact. People discharge when their distresses are contradicted, and they have someone's aware attention. Men have been attacked when trying to discharge, and so for many of us the environment looks a little too hostile to allow certain kinds of discharge. This view of the world can get locked in even though the situation changes to become more safe.

The counselor can counter this distress by contradicting it directly. Treat it as a distress; don't take it personally. Don't try to make the client pretend it isn't there. For example, you could let the client talk about why it isn't safe and help him discharge on the thoughts that come up. Help him discharge on how different it is now. Men discharge just fine if they can perceive any safety and attention.

The biggest need of men's liberation is a clear picture of men's humanness and the benign nature of reality being supplied by the counselor. I don't mean we should now blame the counselor! I mean we all need to discharge about our experiences with men and as men, so that we can supply each other with reassurance about the true nature of reality.

JOHN IRWIN
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA



All Men Are Fine Men

As I read the latest on Lebanon, I began to cry. Not because I was feeling hopeless and powerless about the war there, but because of the men: the fury and sadness of men being killed. When I read about wars, I freeze on the fact that there are people being killed: soldiers, men being killed..

I think today, for the first time, I had a glimpse of all men having a shared experience. I have known this in theory for a long time, and had thought I knew it in practice. Nevertheless, I have still tended to discount certain "kinds" of men as a different breed, fundamentally not like men. I've felt as though it's a shame they are visibly men, and have not wanted to be associated with who and what they are. They embarrass me.

Much of our conditioning is about forcing us away from our humanness to operate within the oppressive society. This is reinforced continually depending upon wherever and however we live. The use of uniforms to dehumanise and depersonalise the military and police force, the pressure on managers to keep people in their place or risk not being promoted or even holding onto their jobs are just two examples.

Recently I was stopped on my motorbike by a policeman who asked me to take my license and insurance to the police station. When I did, I watched the desk man complete the form. He wrote his name at the top, and his age. "Eighteen," he wrote; I looked at his face—he was younger than I thought. I hadn't even looked—I'd got stuck on his uniform. Now he suddenly became another man. We talked and laughed. The uniform had hidden him, and I hadn't looked further.

When men meet, we often restimulate each others' hurts around not being human. We have all been ridiculed when we have made close relationships with other men, told it's not right. When we meet, a flicker of awkwardness or uncomfortableness is enough to send us running away.

What has made it easier for us in the counselling community is a basic agreement that people are good and that men are people. People are hurt, but these hurts can be felt and got rid of. A by-product of this is that we can meet as men and at least get a glimpse of how we have been treated through our agreement not to laugh at one another. This has been important, creating opportunities to be human with one another. But we need to make sure it doesn't stop there. I have heard men say, "Counselling men are different," "If only other men were the same...."

I will sometimes approach another man with my humanness flying and it will enable the other man to be human back and we will get on well, become intimate and good friends. Other times when I approach a man with my humanness flying, he will become awkward, I will get awkward, and we both start acting "normally" and run a mile.

This is where we need to counsel. Our fear of other men lies here ready for discharge. Don't push these incidents out of your mind, or think of them as yet more examples of you "not being able to do it right" or "yet another man who I have to give up on." Counsel on them. The restimulation is just where we don't feel like real men. It's never men "similar" to me that restimulate me in this way—it's always men who are "different" in age (more experienced), in status (more successful), in stature (more athletic), or in articulateness (more intelligent): the ways I feel less than a "real man."

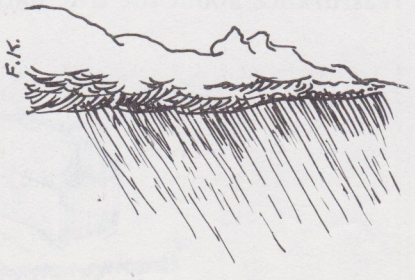
As we discharge these "awkwardnesses," the more our image of ourselves, other men and the possibilities for men will change. We need to take a stance that *all* men are fine men, *all* men can regain their humanness. Giving up on another man means giving up on ourselves.

Trefor Lloyd
reprinted from the Southern England
RC Men's Newsletter No. 8

MEN ARE WONDERFUL

It's time for those of us who can do so to shout at the top of our lungs and with great joy how wonderful men are. Men should be appreciated boldly and openly whenever possible, with no reservations and with no riders like "...in spite of your sexism." I can do this honestly and with love, and the results re-inforce my conviction. There is so much hurt and reality is so obscured in the area of men's goodness that few people have a firm handle on how to contradict (fully!) men's distress. I have been insisting that the women in my life hold onto the essential truth of ALL MEN'S goodness, even as I re-affirm their right and need to discharge on the effects of sexism. It makes a big difference. I am a good counselor for women about sexism, and I have also learned to be clear about insisting that women not complain about men to me without my permission, or without my knowing that they fully recognize the inherent goodness of men. I suspect that this is important for most, if not all, men. Listening to anyone rail against the male sex hurts me a lot, especially because it further isolates me from other men.

Mac Parker
Burlington, Vermont, USA



MEN DESERVE TO BE UNDERSTOOD

During the last couple of years, people in counseling have been starting to look at men's oppression as an issue—seeing the position men find themselves in. Some good things have happened.

It may have occurred to you that men are different from women. They are different in some ways that are difficult to describe easily. I've been developing a picture in my mind from working with men, in my region where I can do it consistently and have some idea of the individual backgrounds, and also at different workshops. I'm going to talk about one facet of the picture I get.

I won't try to give a balanced view. I want to talk about one facet that has been useful to people and that is facing the odd ways men have been conditioned to act.

Men's behavior is strange. You know that. Women know that. Men know that. It's nothing that men have to be apologetic for or embarrassed about; we simply act strange. We act that way for hard, solid reasons, but acting these ways makes it difficult for women to understand us. They wonder why we act in those ways.

By the time we are grown it's very difficult for men to sense or face how deeply we have been hurt in certain ways. Men really are very badly hurt in this society. We have been taught and conditioned to go ahead and function, no matter how we are hurting. So we do. We go ahead but we behave strangely.

From doing a lot of family workshops over the last ten years, I can see a possible origin. It is how little boys are conditioned that is the source of men's strange behavior. Little boys get pushed around in different ways than little girls are. It's not that either boys or girls get much help. I'm not saying that either way of being treated is better or worse. Comparisons simply mislead and restimulate. This area is restimulating enough without that.

Little boys start to behave very differently very early. Little boys, before they can walk, are told to be independent, told to be little men, told not to show distress, told not to feel distress, told not to show that they feel distress, told to buck up and keep going.

The idea of having allies is not suggested or modeled for little boys. As a boy, if you were "lucky", you had an ally. Most boys have had temporary alliances which came and went with the changing of the sun, almost. It was not something that could be counted on for most of us. Of course, it's somewhat different for every boy, different for every man, but some of these factors seem to underlie the boyhood of every man I've ever talked to.

Men carry a distress that has them trying to figure out the world on their own, having to try to make sense of everything in isolation; not being able to, and yet having to. You know you can't do it but you must do it.

Most men are desperate. Men that are tolerable to be around for any length of time are holding off that desperation, but it isn't that it isn't there. That desperation is there on all of the men I've been close enough to to find anything out about. It's there. The ones that you can be around without it dominating the situation simply have figured out how to hold it off to the side and keep going.

For a lot of us, it's been a case of sacrificing a piece of ourselves, putting it over there, and hoping that someday we'll be able to get back to it, then going on in a way that allows people to be around us and allows us to be around other people.

I think what people need to remember, what women need to remember, is that the desperation is always there. It is not there by our choice, it is not there because we want it and it isn't because we want to that we hang it on you women, but we do.

Sooner or later, all of us crack a little in some way, and that desperation splashes on someone we care a lot about. It's the only place that feels safe enough and, with them, we're not holding it tight, strapped in. It comes out in all sorts of funny ways. Everyone has seen it. Every man I've ever talked to has had many, many times when he would be willing to sell his soul, to give everything he had, if someone would even just pretend, just give a hint—of liking him, just a reminder of what it could be like, some reassurance that there was hope of something out there to strive toward.

There are times when it gets that dismal for men. If we're lucky, we can set aside some little corner that's somewhat protected, where we don't have to feel that. This is usually some relationship that we work real hard to keep clear, that when we're around that person there's a little safety to let that desperation show. Every man I've ever seen, has had times where it was like that: he would sell anything, anything, you name it—not that someone would like him, but that someone would pretend, would give him a hint that the possibility of being liked might be out there.

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The other picture is the times desperation takes us over. We're supposed to act right, and look right, no matter how we feel, but we can't pull it off all the time.

There are these times when men feel like they're about to die—about to shrivel up and die—for no overt cause. Something internal is about to sap that last bit of being able to remember to keep on. Usually because of the way we function, the way we look, the way we are pushed to look, nobody notices. Over and over, young men find themselves in the position where they feel they're about to die or go crazy, whatever particular version is in that individual's head. And it seems like nobody cares. Nobody moves to do anything about it. Nobody notices.

There are lots of reasons that nobody notices. Partly, we can't show it—we've been conditioned to feel we mustn't.

Those are the moments when men crack, start acting desperate, desperate for closeness, desperate for sex. Almost every man knows that sex is not the answer; but it's the only thing within reach at that moment that hints at the closeness, hints at caring, and nobody's moving towards *him*. That's what happens in a lot of lives over and over again when that desperation comes out.

Every man knows that, away from that desperation, what matters—even in sex itself—is not sex. When sex works, sex is not important. When sex works between people, what matters is the closeness that was accomplished there—being able to be that open and safe with each other. The sex itself didn't matter. But when it doesn't work, then it was important. It was a token of someone being willing to try for closeness. It's funny, but it is that way. The words may not be quite right, but it's something in that direction.

Part of my information is from trying to look at myself, at the places where I have trouble, as much as it is working with other men. These thoughts are not crystal clear, nor do they stay in focus in my mind; I just know there's something in that direction that's important, that's too hard, usually, for people to say. It's hard for men to talk about how strange or how bad we feel, how much trouble we have.

It may sound a little to women like I'm saying, "oh, poor us." I'm not saying that. No man needs to feel sorry or apologetic for the way he is. But we do have to face the way we are; otherwise, we're not going to be able to get out of here. It's fine to talk about how great and good, powerful, etc., etc., warm, gentle, blah, blah men are. That's wonderful and true, but we can't use it to avoid the work we have to do.

It's difficult to face how bad we feel, a lot of the time. I don't quite know how to communicate to women how entire that isolation is, how solid and common it is on men, and how much it has defeated us for large parts of our lives. We have not been able to figure it out, to figure a way out of it. We have been corraled by it for large parts of our lives, and it has been only the exceptional times when we've been able to find a way to get completely clear of it. We know it's there. We struggle with it, but we still have to win this struggle. I think it's useful to say this as straight as I can.

My thoughts tend to run out at this point because I'm talking from my own fog. I'll pull back and take another run into the fog.

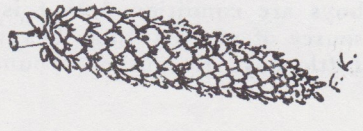
This is how a lot of us try to do things in this area because we know we're not going to have any guidance or help. We put our heads down, build up a full head of steam, and see how far we get before we fall flat. We know we're going to fall flat; there's no way out of that one; we know we're going to lose eventually, but, damn, we're going to see how far we can go. That's a tone that men often have to adopt to keep moving. "Okay, so you're going to defeat me, but you'll find out how much it takes to defeat me."

That's partly why men watch football. That's one of the places where it's all right to put your head down and push. That's not a terribly rational approach to life, but it's one that most men have to use in many situations—the closest to a guideline we have been able to think up as a way through some things. So a lot of men identify with football, even those that never played football. Just the idea of being able to put one's head down and try that hard in one direction and be *sure* of what one is trying to do is appealing. No question about what your goal is; you want to get the ball over that line. That has an appeal compared to the confusions and struggles we usually operate in, to have a goal set and know it's all right to push in that direction.

At a workshop where I gave a talk like this recently, a man, the father of a young boy, asked what he could do to prevent his son's growing up desperate and miserable in this way.

I said that the father had to cuddle his son. He has to cuddle him every day. He should go into his room every morning and jump into bed with him, put his arms around him and tell him that he's so glad he's here. Tell him what a marvel he is and that he wants him near him, as long as he wants, for the rest of his life. Give him that steady, dependable contact so the boy never feels like he has to be isolated. Boys need to know that there is a place where they don't ever have to question their complete acceptance and support.

TIM JACKINS
FROM A TALK AT CONRI II
JANUARY 1984



A WOMAN REACHES OUT ON MEN'S ISSUES

Dear Chuck,

I've been reading **Men No. 2** *every chance I get. The article on dealing with jealousy proved helpful to me in my women's support group when two women in the group said they were feeling jealous in their relationships with the men in their lives. Good discharge resulted as the appropriate contradictions were used.*

About a month ago, I casually decided to ask the men teachers at the community college where I work the first two questions on the "Questionnaire" for the next issue of **Men**. *Then I asked the women teachers and then one of the women teachers asked the students in her class and gave me the responses. Some of them follow. There is some distress in most of the answers, but I thought you would be interested in receiving a wide-world response. It certainly was interesting to me. Almost to a man, the men were stymied by the first question.*

One man objected to the use of the terms "power," "balance," and "allies" because they are war terms (he is in his sixties). He also says that the phrase "eliminating sexism" is good. Finally, he thinks there needs to be more variety in the magazine. This is just a small sample of the discussions that "raged" for more than a week after I asked the questions. One of the teachers (Harvard grad) read the whole magazine. A couple of others did too.

Anne Beaumont

1. WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT BEING MALE?
2. WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT BEING A MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN HELPFUL TO YOU IN GROWING FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD?

A: "That's a tough question. Ask me what I least like—losing my hair. I like having control over my life."

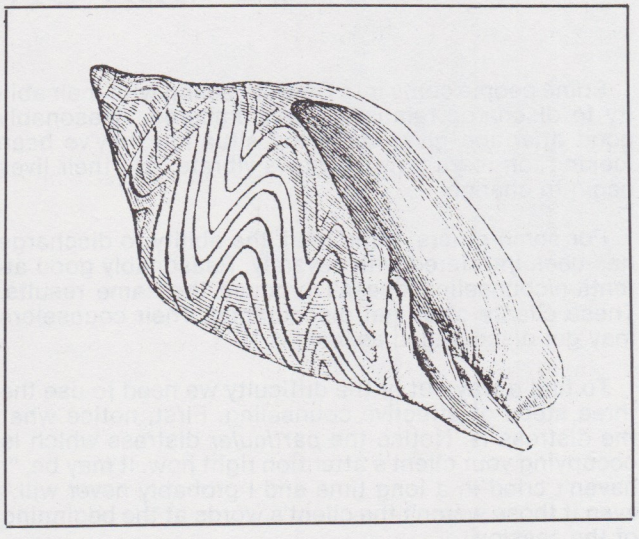
"It would have been helpful to understand women, because I didn't have a sister or a mom growing up. I would like to understand women."

B: "My wife, and peeing standing up."

C: "Physical strength, and that men inherit the culture, and a feeling of personal security. It was hard and is hard having more power on the surface, but also being a target for effective attacks. Not being as healthy as women is hard too. A greater awareness of other people's problems would have helped me grow up."

D: "A feeling of personal security; not being in as much danger as women are on the street."

"I would have liked a school environment which was less violent, not ugly and poverty stricken. Interpersonally, things were ideal, but not at school. Be straight about the question, e.g., what do you like about being male as opposed to being female?"



E: "Society's perquisites: It's easier for a man to have a profession than a woman. Males probably succeed with less effort than females. Males are more apt to be hired in a profession that involves decision-making skills."

"A car received sooner would have made life easier growing up. It would have provided me with independence."

F: "Not having the responsibility of babies; being able to work with tools. It's a desirable, wholesome attitude to like your gender. As a male, I also take a special enjoyment in the society of females."

"I least enjoyed the prospect of being responsible for the welfare of other people in the family (i.e., wife and family) when I was younger." (He's eighty-two.)

G: "I'd rather have responsibilities than not have them. I like sex. I like not being afraid. I liked growing up. The only thing I would have changed would have been a few decisions I made on the basis of what my parents wanted rather than what I wanted."

H: "All my sexual parts are hanging outside my body. I don't get yeast infections. They didn't let us sew and cook when I was growing up."

STUDENTS

I: "I guess it would be all the opportunities that are offered to men and not to women. Also, I feel somewhat more powerful than a woman."

J: "I like the fact that in our society males are seen as "macho," rugged individuals. To me, being a man is the ultimate! Being a man also means to treat others with respect and to treat a woman with dignity and honor."

COUNSEL MEN ON DISCHARGE ITSELF

Some people come into Co-Counseling with their ability to discharge relatively unencumbered. Reasonably good attention gives them the situation they've been looking for; tears flow, trembles vibrate, and their lives begin to change!

For some others, often men, the ability to discharge has been interfered with severely. Reasonably good attention/counseling doesn't produce the same results. These clients often get discouraged. Their counselors may get discouraged as well.

To find a way out of the difficulty we need to use the three steps of effective counseling. First, notice what the distress is. Notice the *particular* distress which is occupying your client's attention right now. It may be, "I haven't cried in a long time and I probably never will," even if those weren't the client's words at the beginning of the session.

So think of all the possible ways to contradict the distress and go ahead and contradict it...enough.

This particular fear often receives a good deal of respect; if we think about scorning this fear like any other, we're on the right track.

A few possibilities for counseling on this are:

* Ask what discharging was like when she was younger.

* Ask about when he does discharge now in his everyday life.

* Listen to the stories about when discharge was discouraged or ridiculed.

* Point out and delight in all the forms of discharge you've noticed in sessions.

* Show confidence in the person and the progress she is making. Each gain is important. (This is different than expressing hope that someday things will open up.)

* Have your client pretend to cry or shake or laugh while you, the whole class, the whole world, or his junior high school gym teacher looks on.

* Ask your client to try and stop you from crying, etc.

* Keep thinking. It's just a variety of distress.

My experience has been that a little good counseling goes a long way on this area. Once things loosen up and discharge increases, the amount of contradiction increases too. The pattern is not so much starved as shaken to pieces or drowned by the client's discharge.

Clearly all of us have had hurts about not being allowed to or encouraged to discharge. I suspect that many who might otherwise give up on RC after a class or two would greatly benefit from some work in this area. I'm wondering how much even more experienced Co-Counselors might gain from an occasional session on the subject.

John Schmieding
Amesville, Ohio, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 57

Give Men A Hand and Some Safety

I saw the piece on "Definition of Terms" in **Present Time** No. 54, and while I agree that counselling isn't for "getting in touch" (whatever that might mean) or for "feeling our feelings," I think that there's more to it, particularly for us men. I have to agree completely that RC isn't for "feeling our feelings." It's for re-emergence, and anyone trying to do anything other than that is going to have problems.

However, part of our chronic distress as men is a dread of feeling anything at all. I've seen men in counselling, beginning, look utterly baffled that they might have any sense at all of what's happening inside themselves. I think that while part of the content of our distresses remains that we cannot or should not feel anything, it will be a useful contradiction of some sort to suggest that we can feel our feelings, whatever they are, but as nothing more than or less than feelings. We needn't either chase after them or run away from them. They will come and go: some of them will change with discharge, some disappear, some emerge, but we needn't let ourselves be dominated by them.

Part of the problem is, of course, that we use one word ("feeling") to describe a wide variety of interior sensations—from restimulations on the one hand to delight in the world on the other, from the sensation of ideas forming themselves inside us to that of imminent discharge. One of the ways we've suppressed discharge we weren't allowed to have, is to have suppressed any feelings that might lead to it, and sometimes in sessions we continue to do so. This seems to me as much a problem as trying to feel things. We've been told that we shouldn't have felt grief or anger in situations where that's what it made sense to feel. Equally, there are a lot of feelings unconnected to distress that we've been told we shouldn't have or that it would be dangerous to have: such as feeling care for ourselves, feeling proper rest, loving young people, etc. I think it will remain a useful contradiction for a lot of us that we can go ahead and "feel it," and it wouldn't surprise me if that's what people were looking for, when they talk about feeling feelings in counselling .

Alan Scott
Lewes, East Sussex, England
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 57

A LARGER ROLE IN RC FOR MEN

I notice that, although nearly half the people in the world are males, we make up a small part of the Co-Counseling Communities. I think several.things cause this: (1) We are not introducing our male friends to Co-Counseling in great numbers.

(2) Any rote counseling males find at the fundamentals level will work even worse for them than it does for most females and they may leave RC in confusion. (Some unaware counseling and teaching habits survive in RC because they work just well enough for most counselors, who are women. Many do not work for men because men's shared, chronic distress is just enough different from women's that the patterned counseling flops.)

(3) Advanced male counselors are barely getting contradictions from their counselors on their most chronic distresses (feeling guilty for being male, not paying attention to their feelings, performing for their counselors instead of discharging, trying to save the world in their sessions, etc.).

For RC to be effective for any of us, this needs to turn around so that males flock to the Co-Counseling Communities and flourish here. And there is every sign that this change is happening.

Here are my thoughts about how to make RC more available to males.

Discharge our painful feelings connected with males so we can think clearly about males and act rationally towards them. Some directions to try as a client in your sessions are:

What do you think of when you think of "males" (or "men", or boys")? Tell your counselor each thought, however brilliant, boring, embarrassing, etc. it feels.

Think of a man who is fairly important in your life but isn't in RC. Imagine introducing him to Co-Counseling or telling him about RC theory. What thoughts and feelings come up as you do this? How would you go about it? Where would you get stuck?

Think of a man you Co-Counsel with. Tell your counselor you will do *anything* and *everything* for his re-emergence when that man is your client. Now what *won't* you do? (First thought.) Discharge on whatever feelings come up and repeat the commitment. This is the frontier of your counseling relationship with that man.

Tell your counselor the way males' re-emergence is crucial to yours. (Discharge, discharge...)

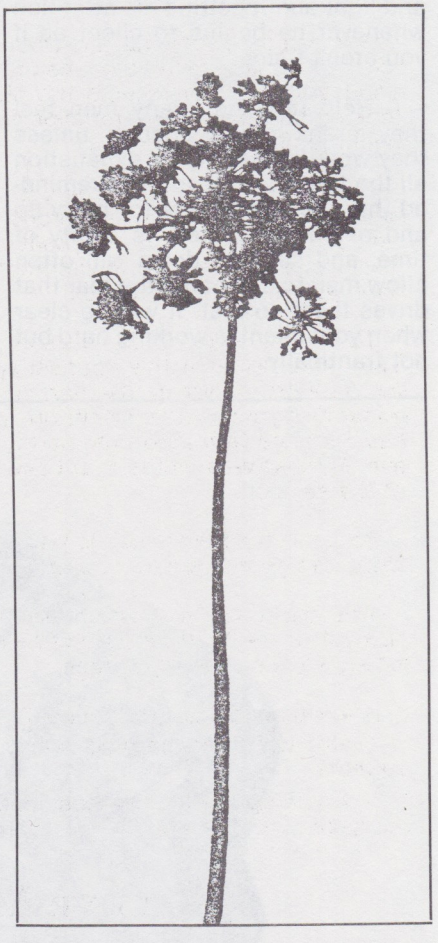
Your ability to understand males and think about them will leap ahead with a surprisingly small amount of counseling in these areas. When you counsel in these areas consistently, you will find yourself making your relationships with men more and more as you have always wanted them.

To go with our increasing awareness of men in Co-Counseling, here is some information culled from sessions and my own experiences as a counselor and a client.

Two common yet mistaken notions about men are:

—Men don't discharge in their day-to-day lives. Actually, most men laugh, yawn, stretch and sweat pretty freely and talk about their interests with great enthusiasm. These are all important forms of discharge or zestful behavior.

—Men have more trouble discharging than women do (or are "harder to counsel"). Men, like all people, discharge spontaneously (without special effort) when warm, friendly attention is paid to them and they have their distress contradicted. (A control pattern or dramatization is not the present reality and if the client's attention is tied up in one of them, discharge will slow or stop.) Sometimes what the client needs from the counselor to be able to discharge and what the counselor is *comfortable* providing are the same and the session seems easy. In other cases, what the client needs contradicts the counselor's distress recordings and trying to provide that feels hard to the counselor. There aren't "easy" or "tough"



clients, just counselors with more or less attention in a given area at a given time. Men discharge fine, and when counseled well, they discharge heavily.

Four ideas I find helpful when counseling men are:

—All men are unique and no formula will work for all men or the same man for all his sessions. If you watch and listen carefully, you will notice what each client needs at each moment in each session.

—Draw attention to the counselor. This is the lightest of the spectrum of counseling techniques and is useful. In this society men have been shut off from loving care to a great degree. Noticing that someone is listening and cares often brings discharge. Don't hurry past the first stage of greeting your client

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and having him notice you are there. Help him remember to speak *to* you, for you to understand, instead of at you (really, to himself). Be creative and light about getting his attention whenever he begins to client as if you aren't there.

—Help relaxing. Many men feel they aren't doing enough unless they work themselves to exhaustion all the time. Men need to be reminded that they don't have to "hurry up and re-emerge." There is plenty of time, and calming down will often allow men to discharge the fear that drives them so fast. It will be clear when your client is working hard but not frantically.

—Sessions for the client. From an early age males are forced to ignore their feelings, needs, and desires, and do what they are told they must. As adults, men often lose track of what they want to do and will spend their sessions doing what they think they "should." If expected to discharge, they will dutifully scrape up some discharge; if asked for a memory, they will find it, but they may be clienting within the chronic feeling that no part of their lives, not even when they are client, is for *their* use. (Some men describe this as feeling like they must always perform for others.) Men may also spend their sessions hurrying to discharge and re-evaluate so they can get back out there and overwork some more. Men need to be reminded that when they are client it is a time for them, to use, to think, to feel, even to enjoy. Ask lots of questions about us. Don't be discouraged if your client tells you he doesn't know how he feels. Ask about his life, past and present, his hopes, ambitions, abilities, special interests, and anything else that will draw his attention back to himself. Help him spend his sessions on what it's like to be himself instead of all the things he should be doing. The pull to "get to work and do something important" is very strong and your client may feel like he's wasting his sessions. He's not. You'll know when he digs in to work on material for the sake of his own re-emergence.

As a male teacher and leader in this Area, I am delighted to suggest we need to work on getting more males into the Community. I will appreciate hearing how these ideas and suggestions prove useful to each one of you, and your own thoughts on men and Co-Counseling.

Tihm Mixon
Eugene, Oregon, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 54

photo by David Pascale

What It Has Been Like for Me as a Man in Counseling

Being a middle-class, Protestant, heterosexual, white, good-looking, athletic male has made my life look pretty okay to people, I suspect. It isn't. I can't imagine feeling more alone, empty, and resigned.

I got into counseling in the spring of 1975 largely because of the interest of my best friend, but stayed because I could see that the theory filled in a hole in my understanding of how people could be good yet act so irrationally. I liked learning the theory and read everything I could find. It was exciting to find this profoundly sensible view of the world. It was very much in line with some of the political views I was developing.

The practice of counseling was mixed for me. I was happy about learning to be a counselor and felt like I was a better person. I could see how it helped people to show their feelings.

There was a problem though when I tried to be client. I couldn't be as relaxed and trusting as it seemed everyone else was. I always felt like I had something wrong with me. Why was I so different? I could talk about anything (almost), things that seemed painful enough, but alas no tears. I mostly tried shaking about my hurts, but my life didn't seem to change.

I counseled on not feeling safe without much success. My counselors took my not discharging as their personal problem. I ended up reassuring them that it was my problem not theirs, but I didn't get much benefit from this.

Classes have felt hard because whenever I was client I felt like I was showing how difficult I was. Why wasn't I a good client like everyone else? It looked as if everybody used their five minutes to pour their guts out while I would sit there trying to figure out what I felt like. I would try to think of something funny to say so I would laugh and shake some. I didn't want the counselor or me to look bad. I had distresses that I needed help with, but none I felt I could cry in front of people about. I couldn't stop feeling under scrutiny.

I had grown up not ever having felt that my feelings mattered to anyone, and so had decided to put my mind on other things. I had been criticized a lot and felt like if I was a better person, then bad things wouldn't happen to me. I wanted to look as good as I could, so people would treat me better. In class I felt I was supposed to show the things I was trying to hide.

Trying to look okay was/is such an ingrained habit that class was too short a time to notice that it was different now. Workshops were better. There was more time to thaw out. Sessions have been difficult because there is less time than class to see that someone is there for me and interested in me. I felt like I wasn't doing very well; I wasn't using my time well.

I found myself more and more aware of my distresses and how they interfere with my functioning, as counselor and otherwise, and yet not able to rid myself of them. Reading *Present Time* was murder. Story after story of how people's lives were changing dramatically.

I found myself jealous of the ease of discharge for others, angry that people didn't know how to help me, resigned to accepting that they were doing the best they could, not too hopeful but committed to figuring it out myself.

I found myself knowing the theory well enough to take leadership, but not able to clear out my distress fast enough to handle what leadership brought up for me. This in combination with various changes in my life meant putting off teaching after having taught a year or so.

I have come to realize that there is no problem at all with my ability to cry, shake, to show feelings. I know this because I sometimes cry hard by myself or when under too great distress to prevent it. We have not understood how harsh the oppression has been for men. The environment has been unsafe for men to show their feelings. In counseling, it is safe to show most things, but the distress is still in place from the years of hurt.

We need a contradiction to the hurt of lack of interest in our lives and ridicule about our feelings. Men, like women, need to have their distresses contradicted.

I have decided that I can act as though people are interested and get the help I need. I have been building closer relationships with the people around me who can help me discharge the distress that leaves me feeling isolated. This has helped. Feelings of being isolated can be eliminated through counseling on them. Helpful attitudes are genuine interest, reassurance that it is different now, and the willingness to hear how bad things have locked.

John Irwin
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Being A Man in RC

What first attracted me to RC was that it offered the opposite of the isolation and loneliness that characterized my life at that time. The contact with people who were friendly, open, willing to listen and be supportive would have kept me coming back under almost any circumstances. It was only the no-socializing rule that kept me from using RC as my only contact with others.

I didn't do any discharging beyond talking for nearly a year and a half, but all that beautiful contact kept me coming back. During this time, I watched some other Co-Counselors make noticeable movement toward re-emergence, and I knew I wanted that for myself. Today, one of the main reasons for my remaining committed to RC is that I now use it to help me re-emerge from the effects of my life's difficult times.

The times when counseling has worked well for me, the times when I have "turned a corner" all have something in common: a willingness on the part of my counselor to openly and positively acknowledge my feelings.

As a man, I have been made to feel that my feelings were not okay in many ways. In fact, it still feels as if feeling some of my feelings is about the worst thing that could happen to me. Any effective counseling for me must contradict these "feelings about feelings" as well as what I am working on at the time.

The first time I really cried in a session was such a time. I had been talking about my mother's death for a couple of months without other discharge and this particular session seemed no different. Finally, out of boredom and frustration I told my counselor I didn't think there were many feelings there. Instead of agreeing and letting me change the subject, he told me he saw how lonely and frightened I had really been and would I please tell him about it. The floodgates opened and, after years, the grief began coming out.

Another time in a session, I was trying to concentrate on the good things about me, but with little effect. Finally, I got to talking about how this voice would come in after validation with a "Yes, but...." Instead of ignoring it, my counselor directed me to tell it to shut up. This simple acknowledgement of the feeling let me begin to shake. For the first time, I stepped out of a chronic pattern!

At an early men's workshop, I was attempting to work on how I felt about men. Charlie Kreiner directed me to let the others there see how I felt – no matter how "ugly" the feelings were. All the hurt and terror that came off then changed my whole outlook on men!

Early in my counseling, I had a teacher whose immediate response to any distress was to "turn it around," to "make it light and bright." This was supposed to invariably bring discharge. If it didn't, the client got the feeling he wasn't doing it right.

For me and the occasional other men who came into the class, it never worked. The message was "your discharge is okay, but not all those ugly nasty feelings." Finally, one day in a demonstration, it was too much and I screamed out, "Dammit, I don't FEEL light and bright," followed by copious discharge. When I looked up and saw the teacher's shocked expression, it cut off again. I still was not doing it "right."

I think men are always aware of "don't feel" messages. While the overt messages I have described are not so common in RC any more, there are still subtle ones around. Any indication of less than real interest on the part of my counselor is enough. *Acting* interested won't work either. A counselor must *be* interested to be effective. Any signs of restimulation on the part of the counselor will shut off my discharge.

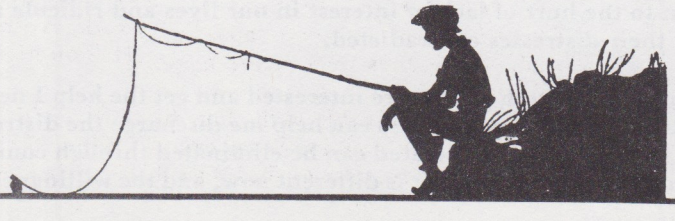
Giving directions to say or do is often counterproductive. Men have learned that often they must go ahead and do things no matter how they feel. To accomplish this they learn to shut themselves down to the extent necessary to get the task done. This is called "working up your courage."

Being asked to do or say something often restimulates this with the result that I end up more shut-down, not less. Counselors of men must be aware that this frequently goes on and help the client to stay aware when he tries to hold a direction.

Some men learn to dramatize their feelings, no matter what they are, through raging. It is the only way many of us have been allowed to show anything. Sometimes, in a session, a man's feelings will show up through this dramatization. To stick a pillow in front of him when this happens is to invite him to fall back into the control pattern/dramatization. It seems more productive to direct the man in lighter ways that will not invite this shut-down.

We men in RC must step out of our own guilt feelings and work to establish ways that RC can reach *all* men. I do not think that our re-emergence can be complete until we do so. We must reach out to all men with increasing effectiveness.

Nelson Highly
reprinted from the Southern Region (USA) RC newsletter



Men Cry Easily When It's Safe Enough

Gunnamatta Bay Workshop
January 1983
led by Kathy Miller
open questions class

A: I find it difficult—not only discharge but even talking. I can't focus on a thought. In order to discharge, apart from perspiration, which is non-verbal, I find I have to force it to start with, manufacture it if you like, then it starts to take off by itself.

B: The conditioning against crying in particular is very strong. Don't feel a failure as a counsellor if you can't help a man to cry. Sometimes I do cry easily, but then when I get into a session I don't. I might ring someone up and say: "Hey listen, I want to cry." But in sessions it's hard for me.

I do remember crying when I fell out of trees and drastic things like that. (He talks about his particular family situation, yawning a lot.) That doesn't explain why men don't cry, though. If my sisters got into sessions, I think they'd find it difficult to cry too.

C: In my school days you dared not cry. Even if you came out from an official thrashing and had a tear in your eye, you were ostracised for weeks and you soon learned not to show a tear. It's only in the last ten years I've been able to cry. Before that I put a little box around myself and smiled.

Another thing for me was having older brothers. I wanted to play with them and if I dared cry they wouldn't take me.

D: I remember the word "sook." I didn't know what it meant, but it was certainly a no-no. I was a terrible person if I was a sook.

E: There were many ways we developed controls to prevent discharge, not only crying but laughter too, probably all forms of discharge. It requires skill in the counsellor to detect that a control pattern is operating, let alone find ways of attacking it.

We simply forget what has happened. That's something it would be helpful for men to do—to get back every bit of memory they can and then extend it and thereby get to the events that had been forgotten when discharge was impossible.

F: Everyone gets conditioned not to cry, but more so for men. I see RC as giving permission to women to use the discharge process which is already open to them, whereas it's a total contradiction to men's conditioning. It's a feat for any man to be in RC and to discharge well. There's a tendency at times for us to sit and look stunned at each other.

I went through ten years of British public school. I remember crying for about six weeks every night when I went away to boarding school and I know a lot of the other boys did. You put a pillow over your head and you cried silently. The public school system is just an exaggerated form of what men get. You get the crap beaten out of you.

When I got into Co-Counselling, the first night the leader said: "Look, it's all right for men to cry." And I just cried. Some men can receive that permission. Others need a lot of persistence.

It's very moving for me to see another man cry, particularly outside RC, because you know how much there has been to push him to that point. The few times I've seen my father cry have been devastating—it's so far under. It cuts me up to see my brother cry.

Even within RC, I sometimes feel like a third-class citizen because I'm a man. Sometimes we're made to feel third-rate when it comes to emotion, as if we're not capable of the fine differentiation of emotions that everyone else is. I sometimes find, like B, that I cry more easily outside of sessions than in. There's no technique that'll make me cry, just the opposite—someone being loving. I was counselling with X a while back. I'd been crying, and she said: "It must have been hard to stay human in the system." I sobbed deeply. It's amazing how hard it is to hold on to your humanness in any shape or form in the system as it is. And yet men do it.

I see it hundreds of times in my job as a counsellor. A man comes in and his lip is going up and down a lot but he can't actually cry. It's no good saying it's all right to cry. It's weak for them. They'd be ridiculed. So they go out and get drunk night after night if they're miserable. You drink yourself into numbness.

It's a real fight not to give up on men and not give up on yourself and not go to women all the time. You try to get close to a man and you'll probably come up against his fear of Gayness. You give a man a hug and it's always a rigid A-frame hug, a slap on the back that hurts.

Try to make it no big thing to cry. So what? You cry. Otherwise the pressure makes you dry up completely. The more you say how good it is to cry, the more the average man is going to shut up. If you do see a man outside of RC crying, you'll know something dreadful has happened. It's a little bit easier inside RC, but not much.

G: (sobbing) The models of masculinity I had. I never heard my brother cry. He's two years older than me and I never heard him cry. He's so isolated. He drives an hour to work, works, drives an hour back. He's on his own. Never a tear.

My father. I only remember him coming anywhere near crying once. I was in a chair, he was in front of the

continued. . .

continued. . .

fire. Somehow it came out that his mother had just died. I'm not sure whether it was one tear or two—one from each eye—and he said: "Oh, how silly of me."

It's not just crying. It's the whole thing, it's the isolation. I guess just talking is discharge, that easy talking which mainly women know how to do. Often I feel like a potato in the company of women. I feel solid, heavy, numb, and inflexible. That's why it's important for me to have a men's group.

(He talks about men's groups he has been in.) I think that sort of work on the conditioning, contradicting the fear of men and the fear of Gayness and so on is important. It's an important way of working for a peaceful world. You're not going to be so prepared to shoot people and push buttons if you're working against that conditioning.

H: In my case, as well as being called a sook and a sissy, the additional thing was put on me that if I cried I was being "like a girl." If I wanted to be accepted by my father and brothers, if I wanted to survive in that family, I had to stop crying. I had to be a man and men don't cry.

There's a bit of a fear left from being threatened with rejection if I didn't conform, it's a little bit the same in RC. Here I'm not conforming by not crying, and I think, "Oh oh, am I going to get the boot?"

I used to have a New Year's resolution: I'm not going to cry this year. I'd go two or three months without breaking it. Eventually I got to the stage where I never cried any more.

J: It may be a little easier for me to cry than some men. I do admire men who are in RC for being in RC and sticking at it. It seems to be a contradiction in terms. You seem to live a double life—one life in RC and one in the wide world. There are two sets of rules you've got to live by, and it's rough trying to integrate the two. That's the difficult part for me, knowing that people freak out when you cry outside of RC.

K: It's all true. I've got no memories at all of what happened, but I just know what we all must have gone through to get so far removed from being able to function like human beings, and how much I must have fought before I'd be like that, and how much and how heavy and how complete the conditioning is that I now go around much of the time just numbed. There's so much hurt I've never been able to feel that I don't know how to any more. It's like now it's too much, I can't even let myself know about it. There's years and years of living with it and the message is: "You can't function if you even get close to feeling it. You've got to keep your mind off the hurt and you've got to keep numb and whatever the cost, whatever it means in being shut down and not being able to think about things, not being able to do things, that's the only option."

It's not great.

transcribed and edited
by Jonathan Shaw
reprinted from the Southerly Buster
RC newsletter in Australia

LIVING UP TO MODELS AND ROLES

I thought you might want to know I had a good session recently on being a man. I was Co-Counseling with another man, a student of mine. During his sessions (he was also counseling on being a man), I had an insight of what to do. Unfortunately I had it toward the end of his session. When it was my turn I had him counsel me in three ways:

1) Who in your life was a model man for you? I talked about a man I know and admired when I was very young.

2) How are you a real man? Or man enough? I went naturally into this—and it may be the next logical step, but it may also be switched with step 3.

3) How are you not man enough? Here's where I discharged a lot.

Anthony Logrande
Plainfield, New Jersey, USA

Men to Men

I have discharged and thought a lot about the session at Jimez and hope that some of my thoughts will be useful in thinking about men counseling men, men fully loving and feeling love from men, and about how people in leadership can secure the counseling we need to both continue our own re-emergence and to guide our Communities and the RC movement in the right direction.

At the present time it takes a strong commitment and a deep trust for a man-to-man counseling relationship to work. The reasons why are not difficult to see—for most of us, our early expressions of feelings to others exposed us to ridicule and violence. At the very least, our feelings, except in very specific areas, are seen as unmanly and unfortunate things to be gotten over as soon as possible. Occasionally we can now secure discharge against or with the slack of more powerful figures, but when men meet as peers, the result is all too often negative. In the counseling relationship, since our deepest feeling as men is that distresses are to be concealed, then if they are clearly identified, the counselor gets to be "one up on" his client. Few strong men who grew up in male-dominated cultures are going to allow that to happen without great safety and trust.

Perhaps because traditional leadership has been developed in some harmony with male patterning, the problem is exacerbated in leadership. As has been pointed out so often, the wide-world leader's distresses are usually not countered supportively or well, but are treated to an "Aha" by the group on their way to eventual condemnation of the leader and his or her work. The fact that leaders *have* been subject to harassment, violence, and all manners of patterned attack makes it difficult for us to gain access to the one process that we know works to free up thinking, the safe attention of another human being and discharge.

How then can men counsel men effectively, and how can leadership be extended to men? Part of the answer lies in a commitment to our taking the chance of trusting men, along the lines of the Jewish commitment. Given the nature of men's conditioning, this requires both courage and vigilance. Courage is required to take the first step against a core pattern developed for our survival. I believe, however, that it is fundamental to breaking our isolation and distrust of each other as men, and that it is vital to the RC Community, that we not settle for less than true loving and fraternity, which are our birthrights. It will require vigilance, because patterned male attack certainly exists and must not be allowed to damage any of us or our movement forward.

None of us is fooling anybody; we carry our hurts on our faces, in our relationships with others, in the Communities we build. We have the tools to see each other clearly and we know that support is possible. The step to feeling and receiving this support needs to be taken by each of us men, first with our most trusted allies, and increasingly with other comrades.

As men to men, as we venture into truly supportive relationships, we can also act against the patterns of male invalidation and try to treat one another as lovingly as we treat women. The gruff "That's not so bad, keep at it" is what has passed for validation among men for generations, so I think we have a warm place in our heart for it, but it is not enough. We need to cherish one another in both word and deed and delight in each other's struggles. I grew as a leader because Diana and Charlotte both cherished me and validated me often. I need to extend this to the men of my Community.

Don Kurtz
Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 54

MY ODE TO MORNING/ BUCK CREEK V

this is new
not at all the same as when
fear tinted my universe—
that was just steam on the lens.
I feel better than I ever have
old sorrows finally relived
released

embarrassment
that silly cage
who cares for it?

not me.
I'm content to live
ever growing
enjoying
the real life
the unafraid life
of people
and feelings
and new thoughts

at peace
safe
I love
I am.

Nils Osmar
Seattle, Washington, USA

TWO MEN GETTING CLOSE

We have been close buddies for seven years. In the past two months we have been growing much closer to one another by acting outside of guilt. The content of the pattern sounded like this: "Be very, very careful about what you say. Don't be inappropriate or oppressive!" but lately we've been letting out the (supposedly inappropriate) comments and saying almost anything that comes into our heads. We haven't stopped thinking about each other, but rather we've taken a direction of erring on the side of saying the wrong thing.

We've found that neither of us is fragile. We now laugh a lot together—old fears discharging. This new direction and the laughter have been freeing up our ability to think about each other and enjoy one another's company. Before, we were so scared of damaging our relationship by doing the wrong thing that, in actuality, little real closeness occurred.

We think that this new turn in our relationship makes sense because of our common background of growing up male. From early on we had to hide our feelings in order to avoid humiliation by the putdowns of our male peers and elders. Our parents, teachers, and other adults pressured us to grow up to be responsible workers and leaders. So we were forced to act as if we were doing the right thing all the time, but by someone else's standards of right and wrong.

The result of this kind of upbringing has been a whopping fear of being caught doing or saying the wrong thing. What was, in our younger years, a survival tactic of hiding our true feelings and thoughts had become, by adulthood, a rigid distress recording that ran most of the time. Many of our male friends and Co-Counselors have been hurt in a similar way.

This pattern has caused great loss to us men who carry it, and to all people around us, because it hides not only our urges to act out, but also much of our natural creative intelligence and ability to be loving. In the grip of this we are terrified to be our true, wonderful selves.

We are now experiencing the real closeness and companionship with one another that we've always desired.

MIKE MARKOVITS & JOEL NAGUSZEWSKI
SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS, USA
REPRINTED FROM NORTHERN LIGHTS,
BOSTON'S RC NEWSLETTER

EVENING'S CHILL

It made no sense to feel this way—so dejected and depressed,
the feeling getting more intense as evening hours passed; —
as if a dark and joyless wall began to grow within my soul—
its shadows getting slowly longer—I felt their fingers spread and grow;
I felt an emptiness and hunger—I craved for closeness and for warmth.

I thought that none of you would notice, hoped that no-one would suspect;
I thought my yearnings were my secret, from outside no-one could detect;
I hoped nobody could discern, hoped my eyes did not reveal
how much I needed someone's help to cast aside the evening's chill.

You sensed that something wasn't right and asked if you can sit by me; —
I tried to brush it all aside—made light of it the best I could;
I need no help, I'll be all right, —
It's just a brief and passing mood.

I must convince you not to come: that there's no real need;
But I hope that...
you won't heed my pleas—that I shall not succeed.

Then you came...sat by my side
your hands on mine you placed,
and in your warmth the evening's chill
has vanished without trace.

Michael Koenig

No Doubts About Men

"I've no doubt about men and no doubts about the counselling process," said Charlie Kreiner at the start of the first workshop led by him which I attended. I have now been to three of his workshops this year, two men's workshops in Ireland and England and an open workshop in the USA. What follows is a miscellany of theory, ideas, and viewpoints collected at all three, which have helped me develop both my counselling and leadership and to make exciting changes in my life.

About Men

We need to take complete pride in ourselves as men—fully male in every fibre including every "feminine" and every "masculine" characteristic.

In working on terror, silence is our first enemy. Help your client to talk about what is so scary in detail. Go after the person, not the distress pattern.

As men we tend to categorise our activities, putting them into boxes. We communicate, think, act, feel, discharge, and all these processes can occur simultaneously.

Our work in reclaiming ourselves as men is to:

1. Face the fact that no one else is going to do it for us.
2. Look at the extent to which our relationships are protective of our patterns rather than re-emergent.
3. Re-establish our primary relationship with ourselves.

About Counselling

Our goal should be to act as though we felt loved, safe, powerful, right now, not wait until we feel those things or have discharged our patterns. We put up with being inside the recording because it appears to feel better. Patterns are addictive and give the illusion/delusion of relief. The more outside the distress recording you are, the nearer to reality you are and the more you feel.

We often settle for discharging the day-to-day restimulations rather than going for the basic, bottom-line chronic distress. We have to train our Co-Counsellors to counsel us and to discharge whatever is in the way of holding on for us. That is our commitment to each other; that is Co-Counselling. The client is giving you everything from the first gesture or twitch of the session to the last, giving you all the information necessary to have a great session; it is simply a matter of being able to pay attention right from the start *to the person.* If we get stuck it is never the client's material which is to blame, only our restimulation; a person cannot restimulate us, only distress patterns. So, where we get stuck as counsellor is precisely the place that we ourselves need to discharge. It is fine to rivet our attention on the client and discharge as we go—this is going to be more and more necessary as we take on each other's chronic material.

We need to give up the idea of RC as a rational island amid a sea of distress—us versus them! This is just an internalised distress recording. There is intelligence and rationality all around us, as well as the distress; we need to go after being in touch with this reality all the time.

A major part of being a counsellor is to fall completely in love with the whole universe, including ourselves.

There are two viewpoints we can take towards our chronic material: one is that this is the area where we have been victimised and need to discharge and discharge on how bad we feel; the other is that this is precisely the area in which we have the chance to transform our environment.

Don't allow the client to settle inside the restimulation and discharge; insist they push out to reality. Sometimes they will appear to be talking and not discharging heavily, but the basic hurts will come up. Discharge is *not* the goal, nor necessarily the yardstick for good or bad sessions; *the goal is re-emergence.*

The purpose of discharge is not to get rid of feelings, only of the distress. The more we discharge, the more we feel—love, joy, anger, hate, fear, grief, etc. So-called rational action without feelings is not human.

About Men as Allies to Women

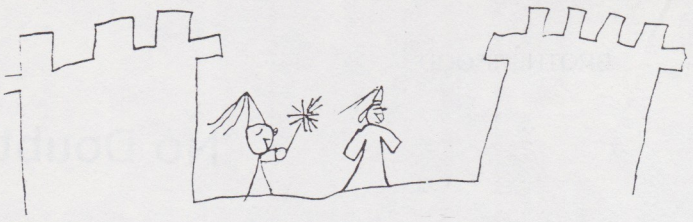
It is our job as allies to women to reclaim every quality which is called masculine and feminine in our culture. We should think about what we would have to do if women did not exist; the frozen needs that would get smacked back in our faces, the fear we would have to tackle, of loving and being close, of being nurturing and tender and supportive and firm with each other. Gay oppression would have to end; if it didn't it would just annihilate everybody. Everything we are attracted to in women as men (not sexual objectification etc., which is restimulation, not attraction) are qualities we ourselves have but are cut off from. The attraction we feel is exactly the signal telling us what we ourselves need to reclaim for ourselves. For example, beauty: if men reclaimed our beauty instead of going around feeling ugly, women would be able to claim their real beauty as distinct from the conditional beauty men put onto them out of feeling ugly and bad about ourselves and our bodies.

We need to use the safety of our counselling relationships to discharge these frozen needs we carry into all our relationships—the culturally reinforced idea that "I'm half, you're half, and together we make a whole," instead of "You're whole, I'm whole, and together we'll make a hell of a relationship, the nature of which we can decide by mutual agreement." It is fine to use the safety of the counselling relationship to fling all these needs and yearnings and longings right at our counsellor; and we need to remember that these needs are there until they are discharged, whether we actually feel them or not.

The only doubts we have about our client are simply the doubts we have about ourselves and they provide us with a welcome indication of precisely where we need to discharge!

These are just some of the things that have stuck with me from three memorable, action-packed, and enjoyable workshops at which Charlie consistently modelled, chiefly by being himself, the things that he was communicating so well.

Christopher Spence
reprinted from Southern England RC Men's Newsletter No. 8



Closeness Between Women and Men

Men's re-emergence in RC is taking important steps! There is a lot of good thinking about men in the Communities, from men in the Communities, in the latest issues of **Present Time**. The Proposed Men's Commitment is getting better and better. Tears came to my eyes when I read: "I will respect my fellow men and allow no slur against men, as men, to go unchallenged." Pam Roby's article on women-men relationships provides an important "outside voice" against male internalized invalidation.

However, men continue to be a minority in the RC Communities. I think one reason relates to confusion about getting close to women. I feel very shy towards women, and the message I've gotten in RC has felt ambiguous. As long as I am client, my counselor is willing, if necessary, to assure me that all women are waiting for me to get close, that there are no limits. In classes and written theory, however, I am told that I can never be careful enough in coming close to women. That may interrupt some men's patterned behaviour, but my patterns make me afraid to come close to women and touch them. I think about what they might want to the point of putting away what I want myself. I need help contradicting this. So if a counselor says it's okay to come close to women, it feels rather like pretending, like "directions to make me discharge" and not like reality.

I'm not the only one walking around with this. Lots of men in and outside of RC wander around with fear, guilt, and shame around women, closeness, and sexuality. This is often not talked about; the bigger the distress is, the more painful and embarrassing it is to speak it out and "expose it" to others. My experience is, however, that men outside of RC are more open about these things than RC men.

Up until now, in men's groups, we've often worked on getting close to each other (which is a good thing), but it sometimes feels "not done" to say you need to get close to women, too. This may also be the old guilt working again: in men-women relationships, men think they have to take what women say for granted instead of also trusting their own thinking or exploring what they want. In my eyes, this kind of docility has nothing to do with being allies.

I also notice every now and then in RC that it would be very bad ("although of course it isn't your fault") to have sexual feelings towards a woman, and that it would even be ideal to live in celibacy. I think that's a wrong interpretation of the fact that everybody is confused about sex; there is no "ideal way," except to keep on thinking about everything you do. If you feel sexual with someone inside RC, you don't act on it, for the same reason you don't go on holidays with that person. If it's someone outside RC, it's okay as long as you keep in mind that person can refuse, or there might be another good reason not to do it. It's sexist to force or manipulate anybody. There's no need to get addicted to sex, but no need to turn away from it in disgust, either.

It may be that men's fear of getting close to women or of getting rejected by them if they try to get close makes them act sexist. Touching women unawarely or manipulating them into sex might be an effort to handle this fear. Most men I know are either shy or rather thoughtless towards women, or even a curious mixture of both. It's not likely there are two completely different men's patterns; more probably they're two sides of the same pattern, the same men's fear of getting close, or of being rejected. (I'm not sure if fear of closeness or fear of rejection is the crucial fear.)

I think the key to ending male sexism is closeness, mental and physical, with other men, women, and children, with none of these groups excepted. Simply being close to a lot of different people will relax tension, will make it easier to respect and love men, women, and children, will starve patterns of fear and make choices around sexuality clearer.

For the last sentence in the Men's Commitment I would propose: "I will support all women and young people and I will cherish and seek closeness to all human beings, men and women, adults and young people."

Eisso Post
Groningen, The Netherlands
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 55

Do Men Have Real Needs?

Of course we do. All humans have a great number of needs, from breathing to warmth and loving. There have been many good articles to explain what happens when our needs are not met. These incidents of neglect are distressful experiences that must be discharged—they can't be met.

These patterns compulsively push us to be in a similar situation as the original hurt, just as any pattern compels us to rehearse the original hurt. They have been labelled "frozen needs" so as to distinguish them from real needs.

I think the distinction around "needs" has been very helpful, especially to women who have been oppressed in such a way as to expect that it is their role to fulfill all needs—particularly men's. The concept of frozen needs has been a good lever for women refusing this role of fulfilling others' needs and beginning to find out what their own needs are.

Counselling men has shown me that, through men's guilt, the concept of frozen needs for men has been taken differently, partially because of a reaction to women stopping their acceptance of our compulsive, unaware demands. The concept has made us focus on our patterns, which we must starve and reject and deny in order to rid this oppressiveness from the earth.

There is a tendency for us men to entrench ourselves in further guilt and rejection based on the predominant patterns of trying to be what others want us to be. In my own counselling, I have found that the focus must be around me discovering and securing my needs. This assumes that I am worthy of having needs—and of having them fulfilled. It quickly shows that it was a hurtful and often oppressive event to not have had my needs met early in my life.

All of the men I have counselled (even the most new to RC) quickly see the distinction of unaware "frozen" needs and the knowledge of what they really want. A useful start is to scan (and eventually work intensively) upon earliest memories of need, or where our needs were not met properly.

My own experiences have focused upon my relationship with my mother—needs of being protected from the violence of others (e.g., rough treatment at birth, routine circumcision) when I really needed to discharge about the rough treatment. So, instead of dwelling on our compulsive needs, why not encourage each other to define and acquire our real needs: we are worthy and powerful humans with no limit to fulfilling our real needs.

Lynn Haller
reprinted form Southern England RC
Men's Newsletter No. 7

Frozen and Real Needs

Counselling points to real alternatives to giving up on "unsatisfactory" relationships, or to continuing but accepting the numbing distress. Counselling on frozen needs is vital.

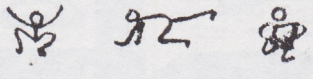
I have been working through my criticalness and disappointment at my partner not filling my frozen needs, reviewing goals where previously it's felt there would be no worthwhile goals without the frozen needs.

Needing to be loved, by one woman in particular, feeling I'm not getting enough attention from her, has previously stopped me from looking outside our marriage for support and love. There is a a real need to be loved in the present, but this is different from the lifelong distressed search for what I never got when I was little. I reached the point where I was able to make the commitment to love Linda for all time, regardless of what happens, just for the fun of it, without expecting anything in return. The active loving is often hidden by the frozen need, but it's a real human need, indeed part of being human.

Almost all of my previous sexual contacts have been laced with distress; love is equated with sex, the search for "better" sex. As far as I can see, any "turn on" is restimulation and needs to be treated as such. I have been discharging early sexual memories, on women I "fancy" and, particularly, on masturbation fantasies, probing through the feelings that I don't want to give these up, that they feel like one of the few reliable sources of "pleasure" I've got. I know the feelings cloud up the way I see women as people.

I'm getting progressively closer to Linda and simultaneously to other people. I am proud to report real progress.

David Feintuck
London, England
reprinted from Southern England
RC Men's Newsletter No. 7



SHYNESS

I am a single man—not by choice. That means I've been thinking about men, women, relationships, and sexuality from a different point of view than most men. I had and still have good, open, solid friendships with men, much more than with women. I feel guilt towards women but also a load of anger about being left alone. I regret not having been more daring and being so self-conscious in getting to know women. I don't blame other men for their "misbehaviour" because I see how complicated it is to find the "golden road" between acting sexist and acting so shy you never got close to a woman. A number of men who act out their sexism have been able for a week or a month to get close to women. People like me with over-careful patterns end up making no contact and feel lonely.

My first two years in RC, there wasn't any interest in men-women relationships. The message I got was: men must work on getting close to each other; if you prefer work on getting close to women, well, that's your sexism and frozen needs, and we'll be glad to counsel you on that. They asked me questions in a way that they could as well say straight to me: "You have to work on your mother!" not because they knew anything about me or my mother, but because a fellow who has trouble with women has to work on his mother.

Harvey said he was interested in everybody who has thoughts about men-women relationships. This is what I think about how it is for a single-man-not-by-choice:

I think it's important that we're thought about *as a group*. This is tricky because it's not a group of people with the same background but with similar patterns that we would love to get rid of as quickly as possible. Our pain is seen as something *different,* not just another bunch of frozen needs or terror-of-rejection.

We've not only done our very best all the time, but what's more important, we've been fine men all the time, a delight to be with and share things with, and tremendously attractive. The last thing is important because among left-wing people (in the Netherlands) there tends to be a taboo around "attractiveness" as something sexist.

Our counselors must listen to us—how it has been from the moment we first looked for a girlfriend or fell in love. Be careful not to push us to tell earlier things. It's terribly embarrassing to talk about these things and you might want to go further back because that's more comfortable for you too. There's a load of pain on looking for girlfriends that's qualitatively different from earlier incidents.

Be thoughtful with directions. We have thought about our situation for years and tried many things. You may have something new within an hour, but it's not sure. Let us tell all about how it has been, the way we want to tell it. Be interested.

Make sure we can make contact with all the women we want, the way we want, for the reasons we want. Don't be afraid we're going to act sexist. If we make mistakes, nobody will die from them. Don't let us hang around in our patterns.

It's important that we can be *relaxed* about our sexuality. It's good to know that we may not need sex as much as we sometimes feel we do; that we can live and have fun even if we don't have sex this month. But it's not helpful being told "you don't have to be preoccupied with sex" by people who have much more sex in their lives.

I think, in general, it's important that every RCer can explore the field of sexuality without embarrassment, not to "have as much as possible" but to know what it's all about and what's fun about it. I'm afraid there are RCers who (try to) "stop having sex" and think they make a big step forward, out of guilt or embarrassment.

Sexuality and closeness have no clear borders. There's a good Dutch book "Afsheid van de sexualiteit" (Farewell to Sexuality) by Jos van Ussel. (I don't know if there's an English version.)

Between our sessions, we have to realize that our needs lie in the future. We must discharge about our loneliness in the past, but besides, there's no reason to feel sad, for from now on we have the same needs, the same rights, the same power as anybody else.

Sometimes we see clearly what happens between other people. We think about relationships, even if we feel powerless about ourselves sometimes. We're fighters; in some areas we're a lot stronger than other people (someone told me he couldn't be alone for a weekend). We don't feel "comfortable" in a pattern; we're willing to go against patterns rather than stay where we are. We want to take back our pride as men.

Our experience is of crucial importance for men's re-emergence. At the same time, it's embarrassing to share it with others—even as a client it's easier to say "I feel lonely" than "I long for closeness with women."

Eisso Post
Groningen, The Netherlands

Male Violence

Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop
Leicester, England
August 1, 1983
—Harvey Jackins

Question: How do you counsel violent men? It seems like there is no support for them; there is only the law, which doesn't solve anything and is a dehumanising process.

Harvey: Violent men are completely human; they've just got violent patterns. They've flipped over into the abusing role from the incidents when they were abused, when they were the victims of violence.

[I'll say parenthetically that I saw a television program produced in Seattle about a month ago, where four convicted rapists, who had set up a group in prison, were brought out with four rape victims, and they were going to talk to each other. Both sides were full of painful emotion, and nobody had any idea of the reality of what went on or could offer any guide for communication. They tried repeatedly. They tried and tried. The women said, "How could you do such a thing?" and the men said, "I don't know," and the women said, "How can you say that?"

Finally the women wanted some response from the men so deeply, they asked, "Would you agree to be castrated?" One of the men said, "I don't think so." And the women turned away in despair because the men would not agree to be castrated.

The men tried to talk, they tried to go back and forth. The one missing element that no one apparently had any notion of, was that every one of those men had, of course, been raped. Any rapist has been raped first—usually as a small child, and then it's occluded. Nobody acts out anything that hasn't been done to him or her. There was no hint of that anywhere, just: "How can you be such monsters? What will we do with our despair?" on the side of the women.

The women said, "Do you still get feelings like this?" and the men said, "Yes, when I feel really down on myself, then I find myself thinking of using violence on a woman—I still do." He was trying to be honest. And the women said, "Oh God no!" Absolutely without hope about it.

Finally, just at the end, one of the men said: "I want to say I appreciate my brothers for trying to work on this, because I know it hasn't been easy," and two of the men started crying. The camera faded out at that point. It was the only human bit in the whole program although they had all tried to do something about it. The missing element was simply that all these men had been raped; that's the basis of their becoming rapists. This is true about any distress that bothers you—the person was victimised this way first before becoming the perpetrator.]

Is there a violent man here? Someone who has violent patterns? (Someone volunteers.)

The general rules of counselling are that you find out what the distress is, you think of ways to contradict it, and then you contradict it. If the pattern is to act out violence, you don't contradict it by encouraging them to act out. (Often at workshops I've asked people to come up and hit me, but these are people who haven't dared hit. Their pattern is to stay in the victim role, and if I can get them to come out and hit me, it contradicts the pattern and they discharge all over.)

(To client:) What do you feel like doing when you feel like being violent?

Client: Hitting my children in the face.

HJ: Got any memories of being hit in the face?

Client: None at all....

HJ: There are various approaches to contradict this. One is just to face the fact. I'm sure he's hated himself for this urge, and just to get him to see that there's a damned good reason for it and "I'm not to blame" is likely to bring some discharge. Another way is to get him to contradict it completely: "I'm really the gentlest and most tender-hearted of all men, and I've been a very good father."

(They work this way—quiet weeping.)

The worry is usually, "How will I work with a violent man? He might get violent with me." Well, not if you stay in contact with the theory. If you start acting out the other end of the pattern—"You're going to get violent with me, aren't you, you're gonna hit me,"—you force him into the violent end and he'll hit you. But the counsellor's distress doesn't belong in the client's session.

When I'm encouraging a victimized woman to feel her power, I'll grovel and whine to crowd her out of the victim role, and she'll come into the aggressor role and push at me, but she'll be discharging all the time.

(To client:) Okay, you haven't been able to remember it. Let's work. People are often baffled by this kind of occlusion. Start out with a perfectly obvious truth—something happened. I didn't invent this.

(They work. Client talks about his early childhood as he's been able to reconstruct it.)

I hear that story over and over again. The father comes home from the war and starts training his family the way he's been pounded on for several years in the army. He'll holler at the six-month-old baby, "Left face!" Since he'd been brutalized all the way through the army, guess what he does to his "troops" at home?

Try a phrase: He must have been a good man all the time, and I wanted very much to love him. (They work.)

(Harvey impersonates a father who is the opposite.)

See what the distress is, figure out ways to contradict it, and then contradict it. It's that simple. You keep your own distress out of it. This distress will always discharge. And you

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by Chen Guilum

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can think of a dozen other ways to contradict it.

Later, after he's discharged a lot, the memories will come back and he'll be able to tell you in detail which hand a certain person had slapped him with when he cried. He gave us enough hints that we can begin to contradict it and get discharge.

Question: Is it always that specific? That people are re-enacting what was done to them when they play out a pattern of physical violence? (Referring to the statement about rape.)

Harvey: As we began working on early sexual memories, I think most of you know, we discovered that almost all women were sexually abused when they were small, then a few men, and then more and more it became plain that almost all men have been sexually abused when they were small children. Now that a few brave souls took the lead on incest and began calling incest support groups, it's becoming very plain that most of the sexual abuse took place in the family—that's where it was safe to mess around; the terrified victim from the previous generation dared to act it out in the family.

Incest is exceedingly common, nearly universal—not quite universal, but nearly. Most of the people who were abused when they were children have somehow kept some kind of a lid on acting it out, they weren't going to do that, they weren't going to do that—but a lot of them would slip just once with a small child ("The child is just a vegetable, they won't know anything"). They're changing the diaper or something, and they think, "Well...." Bang goes the finger, and an incident of horror is laid in for the child. But it doesn't seem important to the adult because they were shut down at the time anyway; they don't even remember it ever happened.

Rape—anal rape, sodomy—is perpetrated on small boys in large, large quantities, and on small girls, as well as vaginal rape. It simply takes place. The child usually occludes it or is told "If you tell anyone about it, I'll kill you" or something like that, which helps occlude it. Almost everyone who fights sexual distress of any kind can trace it back to bad sexual mistreatment early.

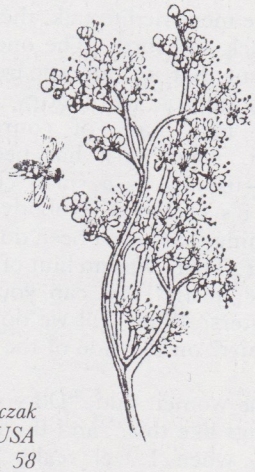
Later experiences of violence, not necessarily sexual, will connect to this early violence. You'll find other ways of acting out and other strange languages, strange sentences and so on come out of there. But remember a pattern is very literal, and if someone has the urge to rape, you can be pretty darn sure that they were raped, (or sometimes that they observed a rape, because that's just as terrifying).

We had an experience during the long controversy over whether Gayness should be declared rational by the Communities—(which we sidestepped and therefore managed to get a lot of good Gay liberation work going without hanging up on it—but at the time it was very disruptive). One of the leaders was very insistent that I didn't know what I was talking about, that sociologists and other "experts" were accurate. I said that this always arises from an incident of sexual distress, usually being victimised when you're young, because the person then feels the urge to pass it on. There's a pull to act it out in the more comfortable end of the pattern, as the violator instead of the victim. And this leader said, "Well, I know you're very sure of yourself, Harvey, but I just can't believe that." We were holding a meeting of leaders a day later and got a phone call that a teenager who was a friend of theirs was taking care of somebody's child and had raped the boy. The mother had come home and had found out, had refrained from attacking the teenager and was trying to counsel him and give him some safety, trying to handle it well. She said the first thing he told her—he was scared and crying hard—was that someone had done that to him two weeks before and he hadn't been able to think of anything since except to do it to somebody else. That's the mechanism.

reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 57

To Ron, My Husband

When I look at him
With the lights down low
His humanness is all aglow.
His face in slumber
Relaxing lines in all their number.
True beauty's left to shine,
The real meaning of benign.
Our children snuggled next to him
Trust him to keep them safe.
He shares his inborn goodness.
No limits from him chafe.
Soft, warm he makes them feel.
In sleep he's very real.



Claudia Brescia-Walczak
Lakeside, California, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 58

Chinese American Men

OVERALL CONTEXT

Among my friends and relatives, the oppression of Chinese Americans has always been assumed to be not too bad, or at least not as bad as the oppression of other groups. Both Chinese and others point to the economic success of Chinese Americans, our scholarly achievements, our good family structure, and our patience and hard work. We are generally thought of as well-accepted by U.S. society and free of the societal oppression that has affected other Third World groups. In the past six months I have tried to think about and read about Chinese American men to see what are the social and psychological factors that contribute to oppression. In what ways are we an oppressed group, and how is the oppression different from that of other Third Worlders and other white ethnic groups such as the Jews, the Italians, and the Irish?

In addition to an external system of patterns that serve to oppress Chinese American men, there is an "internal" system. That is, we internalize the misinformation about ourselves. U.S. society claims that there is no racism against Chinese American men and we agree. This "agreement" is crucial to maintaining an oppressive relationship. There are several reasons for this denial of racism. Some of the reasons are cultural; that is, Chinese American men come from a culture whose patterns are functional and appropriate for living in China, but are not always an effective means of living in U.S. society.

This article will begin to identify, for both Chinese Americans and other USers, the nature and extent of this oppression. It is just a beginning. Hopefully a deeper understanding of the issues will help us define a more rational policy to eliminate all racism.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE AMERICAN OPPRESSION

The first large migration of Chinese to the U.S. occurred in 1852. The Gold Rush of 1849 brought people from all over the world to seek their fortunes. Chinese also came, though three years later than most other groups. Most of them came as laborers to work land claims that had been abandoned by whites since Chinese were forbidden from making their own land claims.

After the Gold Rush, Chinese continued to work as hired laborers building railroads, working in fisheries, orchards, vineyards, shoe factories, cigar factories, canning factories, laundries, and restaurants. Many became cooks and servants. Most of their work was labor intensive and not considered desirable by the average male. It was well documented that the early development of the state of California was largely due to the work of Chinese laborers. Yet the Chinese were treated poorly. There were lynchings, beatings, killings, and accusations that the Chinese were taking work away from whites. Some of these incidents were recorded in English, but most of them are written in Chinese.

There was also resistance: railroad strikes for better working hours and better pay, Chinese American spokesmen at labor organizing meetings to rebut the racist labor platforms, white allies who fought on behalf of Chinese Americans.

During this time, several labor organizers built their political platform on anti-Chinese sentiment. For example, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor wrote in a pamphlet, "Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion": "The racial differences between American whites and Asiatics would never be overcome. The superior whites had to exclude the inferior Asiatics, by law, or if necessary, by force of arms." In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. It excluded Chinese laborers or miners from entering the U.S., but exempted merchants and students. Ten years later an even harsher Geary Act was passed, extending the exclusion act for another decade, denying bail to Chinese, and declaring that testimony by a Chinese could not be used against whites. It also required that Chinese carry certificates of residence similar to the identification cards used today under the South African system of apartheid. The Chinese Americans resisted this strongly. Lawyers were hired to fight this case and it was generally assumed in legal circles that such a law was unconstitutional. Political labor organizers, however, were able to sway the courts against the Chinese. These laws were the first exclusion laws based on race ever passed in the U.S. California historian Walter Bean comments, "Very few nations have ever withheld the privilege of naturalization on racial grounds. In doing so, the U.S. had been in the company of Nazi Germany and the Union of South Africa."

The exclusion laws prevented Chinese men from bringing wives to the U.S. Since most of them left their wives in China, the ratio of Chinese men to women became unusually high. In 1860 in the U.S., there were eighteen Chinese men for one Chinese woman. In 1890 the ratio was twenty-six to one. In addition, several states passed laws preventing Chinese American men from marrying white women. The U.S. Supreme court did not void anti-miscegenation laws until 1967. Because the Chinese were denied many jobs and because of the exclusion laws, many Chinese Americans returned to China. Conditions became so harsh that

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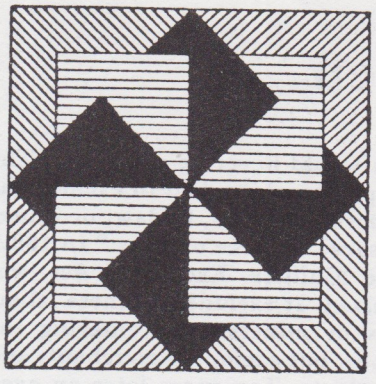


from 1882 to 1920, the Chinese American population was cut in half. Those who remained were forced to live in isolation. Chinatowns became basically all men's communities without the services or activities of women or children. Many of the men were fathers of children living in China; some never saw their children or wives again. The pressures of isolation allowed prostitution, gambling, and drugs to become institutionalized. The suicide rate became abnormally high. Because merchants were exempt from the exclusion laws, many Chinese American men became restaurant, laundry, or small business owners. In this way, they could bring wives into the U.S.

The exclusion laws remained in effect until 1943. Their repeal occurred not because the U.S. recognized the racial oppression of Chinese Americans, but because the U.S. feared Japanese imperialism and sought China as an ally on the Asian front. It was to bolster China's morale and to reduce the effectiveness of Japanese propaganda in Asia during World War II. A token immigrant quota of 105 was given to the Chinese.

The outbreak of World War II was considered by the Chinese Americans to be a "fortunate" opportunity, because the U.S. needed technical knowledge to wage a war. Recognizing that Chinese Americans were highly educated, but without jobs, the U.S. government offered citizenship to those who would enlist in the armed forces. Roughly twenty percent of the Chinese American population enlisted, compared to only seven percent of the white population. One reason for enlisting was to get citizenship; the other was to prove once and for all that they were patriotic Americans. So even though Chinese Americans had lived in this country for almost one hundred years, they still felt obligated to prove their loyalty to the U.S.

Several incidents occurred during this time which were beyond the control of Chinese Americans but would have far-reaching consequences. First of all, Japanese Americans were interned in concentration camps in the U.S. Some of the most liberal politicians supported this action. William Douglas, the most liberal voice in the Supreme Court, wrote the summary of the Supreme Court's internment decision. Earl Warren went out of his way to ensure that the decision was implemented, and President Roosevelt, knowing that the Japanese Americans posed no military threat, supported the action. Walter Lippman, known for his political integrity, stated that, for the Japanese Americans, we can suspend the Constitution.

Neither German Americans nor Italian Americans were uprooted from their homes and interned en masse in spite of the role of the Italians or Germans in the war in Europe. The Attorney General of Idaho stated that "All Japanese be put in concentration camps for the remainder of the war (because) we want to keep this a white man's country." The Harvard Law Review and the American Civil Liberties Union supported the internment order.

The significance for Chinese Americans was that it became clear that the actions of their country of origin could have serious implications for Japanese Americans. And further, the fact that the Japanese Americans were such a small minority compared with the German or Italian Americans increased the chances of racial oppression.

In a short time, Chinese Americans would soon be victimized by a similar form of racism because the relationship of the U.S. with China was deteriorating. From 1946 to 1949 there was an outbreak of civil war in China. The U.S. supported Chiang Kai Shek against the communists led by Mao Tse Tung. There were suspicions that Chinese Americans were supporting the "enemy." Newspapers in U.S. Chinatowns were full of articles alluding to the possibility that the Chinese Americans might also be placed in camps. This scare tactic became more sophisticated as relations between the U.S. and mainland China worsened. The implication was that mainland China was a puppet of Moscow. Therefore, by implication, the Chinese Americans were perceived as possible communist spies.

During this time, the U.S. recognized Taiwan as the sole legitimate government of China. Considerable military and economic aid was poured into Taiwan. Simultaneously, mainland China was perceived as a major enemy of the U.S. A policy was adopted of nonrecognition and the U.S. stopped admission of mainland China to the United Nations. Much of the political basis of the Korean and Vietnam wars was the military containment of China.

There was no previous legal precedent which justified the internment of Japanese Americans. In order to legally justify Roosevelt's executive order and future actions, a freshman congressman named Richard Nixon wrote a bill which eventually was passed as the McCarran Internal Security Act. This bill, in essence, allows the U.S. attorney to arrest anyone who is perceived as a national security threat.

J. Edgar Hoover cited the surveillance of Chinese Americans as a major reason for justifying massive government funding of the F.B.I. In 1955, Everett Drumwright, the U.S. consul general in Hong Kong, claimed that ninety percent of all Chinese Americans were illegal aliens. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.) demanded that all Chinese Americans re-establish their legal status, and created bureaucratic delays if one

was suspected of being communist. From 1946 to 1951 roughly ten thousand G.I. war brides immigrated to the U.S. from China. The F.B.I., together with the I.N.S., detained many of them and placed them in prison for three to six months because of their suspected communist affiliation. Many committed suicide because of the harrassment.

Chinese Americans who declared their support for China had their citizenship revoked. Anti-Chinese forces suggested deportation. Many of these Chinese Americans were given "Suspension of Deportation Status." Under this status they were not allowed to be citizens and at the same time they were also not allowed to be deported. Many were placed in prison for an indeterminate amount of time. Roughly two thousand Chinese Americans have been given this status by the I.N.S. and to this day, not one of them has been convicted of espionage.

Most Chinese Americans have relatives in China and, as is the custom, like to send money to help support them. During the Korean war, the F.B.I. accused Chinese Americans of sending money back to mainland China to support the war effort. A maximum penalty of $10,000 and ten years in prison for each remittance was created. The New York Times published a headline article, "Red Extortion Linked to China Daily News." The essential content was the accusation that the editors of the China Daily News were trading with the enemy. In reality they were sending money to their relatives. Nevertheless, they were convicted and spent two years in prison.

The 1950s was a period of F.B.I. and I.N.S. harrassment. Chinese American churches and schools had their records subpoenaed. Chinese American scientists were prevented from traveling to foreign countries and very often prevented from returning to China. Being pro-China was seen as synonymous with espionage and treason.

More recently, the wars in Asia reinforced racist perceptions of Asian Americans. The dehumanization of Asians was a major psychological ploy used to motivate U.S. servicemen to go to war. The movies "Bridge over the River Kwai," "Deerslayer," and "Apocalypse Now" depict Asians in subhuman roles. A constant flow of misinformation continues today. Articles about torture in China appear frequently in daily newspapers. The rejection of the boat people as immigrants, the forced abortions of Chinese women in China, and the tortures during the Cultural Revolution are highly publicized media information which dehumanizes Chinese Americans.

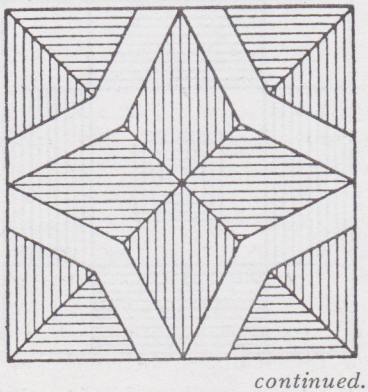
All these events have encouraged the Chinese Americans to maintain a low profile in the U.S. They saw that basic legal channels such as the judicial system, the F.B.I., the I.N.S., and the consulates could be used as powerful weapons against them. Many believe that their fate lies with the fate of China; that is, if China becomes politically powerful, then Chinese Americans will be treated with greater respect and be given access to the privileges of mainstream U.S. society. This of course makes Chinese Americans victims of a political system they cannot control.

STATUS OF CHINESE AMERICANS TODAY

Racism against Chinese Americans continues today although its form is perhaps different from the racism that occurs against other Third World groups. The fact that most U.S. citizens perceive no racism against Chinese Americans is one obvious qualitative difference. One of the facts used to support the denial of racism is that the annual median family income of Chinese American families is higher than the national average. Concealed in this statistic is the fact that in most Chinese families both husband and wife work and often one of the children. In addition, Chinese families tend to work in large cities such as New York and San Francisco where the cost of living is considerably higher. Also concealed in this statistic is the fact that Chinese American men in the labor force earned roughly fifty to sixty percent of the salary of an American white male with the same educational background (1970 census).

To further obscure the racism, many Chinese Americans have chosen occupational fields that are noncompetitive with whites. The 1970 census cites that roughly one quarter of all Chinese Americans are involved in service work, three times the national average. One out of three employed Chinese American women was a clerical worker, while many Chinese American men continue to work in laundries, restaurants, and small food stores. Such jobs are nonthreatening to U.S. society, and lend credence to the illusion of no racism.

There is a disproportionate concentration of Chinese Americans in only a few professional fields. As of 1970, ninety percent of all Chinese American professional men were engineers, educators, or in health-related fields. These fields are generally distinguished by the fact that successful performance can be measured objectively, independent of racial barriers. However, much of the success in the professional fields has come from the foreign-born Chinese. Visible figures such as Nobel prize winners and other famous scientists generally come to this country after having spent their adolescent years in China or Taiwan. There are very few American-born Chinese who have distinguished themselves scientifically.



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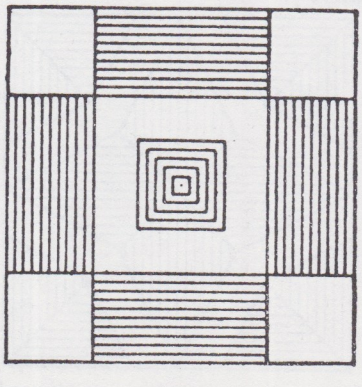
Almost totally missing from the U.S. labor force are writers, artists, entertainers, actors, musicians, news reporters, and athletes. In San Francisco, ten percent of the 11,000 accountants are Chinese American and yet only one percent have positions among the big eight certified public accounting firms that are the most powerful in the country. Especially for American-born Chinese in Chinatown, the opportunities for upward mobility have not improved significantly.

The racism is most clear in Chinatown. In 1966 in San Francisco only one out of 1800 policemen on the force was Chinese. Thus, access to law enforcement was virtually nonexistent for Chinese Americans who could not speak English. From 1952 to 1968, the suicide rate for Chinese Americans was three times the national average. Combined with this, there was a severe drug problem among senior citizens in San Francisco Chinatown who had lost contact with their families in China. Chinatown remains an area with the largest number of cases of tuberculosis in the country.

The case of Vincent Chin has received national attention and has served to raise consciousness about Chinese Americans' status in this country. Vincent Chin, living in Detroit, was at a bar having a bachelor's party in preparation for his wedding. Some autoworkers confronted Vincent with racial slurs. Assuming he was Japanese, they blamed him for the difficulties of the American auto industry. As Vincent left the bar, the autoworkers waited outside and attacked and killed him with a baseball bat. In March, 1983, a judge fined the autoworkers $3,000 each and released them on three years' probation. This is just one example of the recent upsurge of anti-Asian violence. As the U.S. economy worsens, industries begin to move their operations into Third World countries which results in higher unemployment in this country and more anti-Asian sentiment.



For Chinese Americans, the legal system has not provided them with their basic legal rights as citizens. Past history of F.B.I. and I.N.S. harrassment, the Exclusion Act, the Japanese internment, and labor and housing discrimination has had a snowballing effect on the confidence of Chinese Americans in the legal system. They are cautious to involve themselves in any form of social action. In San Francisco Chinatown, only thirty percent of the eligible voters are presently registered. Chinese Americans have been reluctant to become members of political organizations or donate money to social causes outside the family.

DIVISIVENESS OF "MODEL MINORITY" IMAGE

The recent stereotype of Chinese Americans has been as the "model minority." *Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, Time,* and other national magazines applaud the economic success of Chinese Americans. Such titles as "New American Success Story," "Success Story: Outwitting the Whites," or "Confucian Work Ethic" glorify the Asian American experience. Implied in these articles is that if Chinese Americans can succeed, then why can't the blacks, the Chicanos, and Native Americans? This acts as a way to divide up the Third World and it pits us against our Third World allies.

Amy Tachiki writes in the introduction to *Roots: An Asian American Reader:* "By accepting the distorted picture of Asian American success, America rationalizes its racist behaviour—and fools itself that it is responsive to the people. Furthermore the Asian model of assimilation frees the white majority from assuming responsibility for its own oppressiveness, since it implies that nonwhite minorities have to *earn* their rights to American society and it shifts the causes for minority problems away from the society and onto minority communities."

ASSIMILATION

Given this history and the U.S. government's policy of claiming no racial prejudice and no job discrimination, what choice of action was left for Chinese Americans? For most, the only choice has been to accept the dominant ideology, to deny racial prejudice or class discrimination and to deny any connection with traditional Chinese culture. In other words, the vast majority of Chinese Americans were forced to try to assimilate.

Quite often Chinese Americans deny their background to the point where they lose all communication with their parents. There are cases of teenagers growing up in Chinatown who commit crimes and are imprisoned. When the parents are asked to come to talk to their children, the children cannot communicate to their parents what happened. Because the parents do not realize they are caught in the middle of an oppressive system, they become angry at their children.

Many Chinese Americans describe their dual role in their lives. When they go home they speak Chinese, they read their parents' mail for them, they arrange all the necessary details for their parents to interact with white society and they are fearful and embarrassed that their white friends would not believe or understand how their parents can cope without an awareness of the English language. The pressure to assimilate forces Chinese Americans to reject their parents' ideals and customs. But in the process of rejecting their parents' ideas, Chinese Americans find they are still not accepted by the U.S. mainstream.

Trying to maintain valued aspects of Chinese culture is also hard. For example, choosing to be quiet and nonassertive, which is considered honorable in the Chinese culture, forces a Chinese American to be a target for white racism, i.e., "You should be more aggressive" or "Chinese are so timid." This criticism is by no means harmless. Studies have shown that in moving upward in technological industries, one of the main criticisms of Chinese Americans focuses around this cultural conflict. Other typical comments are "This person needs to be more outgoing and forceful. He is not able to mingle or negotiate on a high-powered level. He cannot engender trust in his clients because he is foreign. He is hard-working but too retiring. He is too nice. He can't put the screws to anyone." Or "He is not friendly enough. He keeps to himself too much."

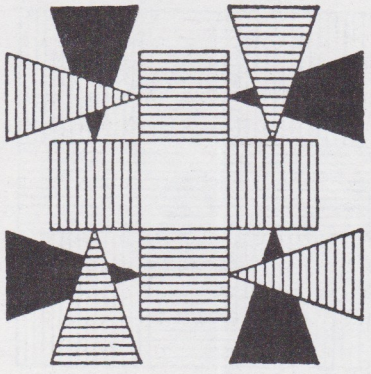
Chinese Americans constantly feel caught in this trap of "choosing between two cultures." Yet the choice is that simple. In trying to survive, Chinese Americans have evolved into a new group with their own unique identity. Many do not identify with ancient Chinese culture, nor do we conform to U.S. patterns of aggressiveness. Using our own flexible intelligence, we are often neither Chinese in the sense of a new immigrant nor are we a USer in the sense of a white ethnic, even though some of us are the product of having lived in the U.S. for 150 years. For this reason Chinese American history can be very complex. The racism has simply obscured these facts.

The misinformation that Chinese Americans form a very homogeneous group also causes problems. In China, there are over forty minority groups, all manner of personalities, heights, body builds, eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and other physical features. In the U.S. some tend to group socially according to American born, immigrant, academic, living in Chinatown, Mandarin speaking, Cantonese speaking, from Taiwan, from the mainland, etc. Chinese Americans may identify with many of these groups, or only a few. Society, in trying to categorize Chinese Americans as one group, have refused to see clearly our uniqueness and individuality. Thus, social agencies assume that if they hire one Asian to handle new Asian immigrants, that one person is qualified to deal with the problems that come up for all Chinese Americans. The internalized racism comes up for Chinese Americans when they do not fall into one of the stereotyped groups. For example, children of immigrants feel shame that they do not know the Chinese language or are not as culturally aware of Chinese society as their parents. The parents, on the other hand, have left their homeland and this emotional break is transferred to their children. There is a need for the parents to see their children adhere to Chinese culture. The U.S. slogan "Love it or leave it" implies that there is no middle ground in the assimilationist biracial system.

THE ROLE OF ART, LITERATURE, AND MUSIC

Literature, art, and music have always served the purpose of describing common experiences, to celebrate and make into legend the feelings and struggles of human beings. These forms are used by each group to commemorate and restate their unique sense of themselves, and have been major tools in maintaining a sense of identity and continuity for most immigrant groups. The cultural strength, and hence spiritual strength, of a given immigrant group is nurtured by the flow into the group of art, literature, and music reflecting personal experience. From this flow comes a new synthesis of present life experience with the wisdom gathered from the cultural experience of the past.

When one reads black literature, Chicano literature, Native literature, Jewish literature, or the literature of Irish immigrants, there is a certain style, a certain accent and



sense of humor that these immigrants recognize as the outgrowth of having survived an immigrant experience. In this sense, ethnic literature is a living art form and for minorities it often illuminates and explains why the minority has been oppressed. The reader reacts with the feeling, "This writer is saying something about me," and this impact encourages readers to become writers, and eventually a school of ethnic writers is created. In contrast, assimilationist literature is a concealment of reality; it serves as a tool to shut off the feelings and outlets of self expression inherent in minority culture and at the same time it serves as a form of entertainment for whites seeking a safe explanation for their curiosity about an immigrant group.

Asian Americans, however, are only beginning to develop a literary voice that is recognizable and non-assimilationist. Two books published in the 1940s both describe attempts by Chinese Americans to win the acceptance of both Chinese family and white society. In searching for the best of both cultures, both protagonists walk a fine line, at times rejecting parental control and with it much of Chinese culture. But subconsciously there is this battle with the U.S. public which reveres ancient Chinese culture as one of the highest achievements in the world and yet refuses to accept Chinese Americans.

Until 1970, only ten works of fiction or poetry had been published by American-born Asian authors. Most of these works were denials of Asian American culture

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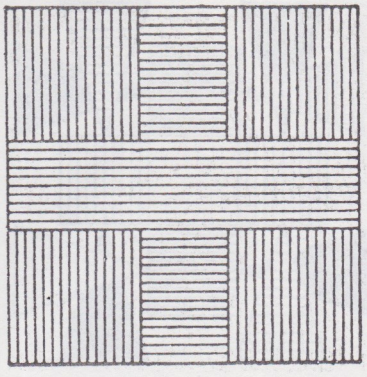


and demonstrations of patriotism to the U.S. Until new information is provided to the public, the old misinformation continues to be part of a system that will oppress Chinese Americans.

ISSUES FOR CHINESE AMERICAN MEN

MANHOOD AND LOVE

In U.S. culture, changes in women's roles and a rapidly changing society have left men uncertain of how they identify themselves as men. For earlier generations in the U.S., men worked hard, fought in wars, protected women and children, and saved lives. As basic survival became less of a physical issue, other ritualized activities were created to define manhood: earning power, class status in the job, prowess in athletics. Uncertainty about one's "manhood," however, is constantly manipulated by society which creates new social gauntlets to test the U.S. man.

The concept of romance and "falling in love" pervades U.S. society and is accepted as an important cultural value. To Americans in love, emotions can be more important than anything else—this is the message communicated to the public. Young people in high school are expected to discover how to find a mate, how to flirt, how to socially distance and socially charm people of the opposite sex. One's "manhood" is often attached to these issues of sexual awareness and peer group sexual-related activities.

Most of these concepts, however, are a recent creation of western society and are not practiced or emphasized as strongly in other societies. The Chinese who came to the U.S. had a distinctly different set of social values and customs around the mating process. The anthropologist Francis Hsu writes in his book, *Americans and Chinese:*

"In China the term love...rarely occurs in Chinese literature. The term 'lien ai' or romantic love is strictly a modern linguistic creation reflecting the need of an expression for its Western equivalent. The same is true of the term 'ai jen' or lover....For centuries they (the Chinese) have considered parental arrangement in betrothal and marriage to be part of the order of nature. For centuries Chinese lovers have avoided all public showing of affection and they have not exhibited either in public or in private the familiar signs of love so common in the West. In fact when a man said that he loved a girl [sic] the statement usually carried the implication that something irregular was afoot. If a woman told anyone that she loved a man it would be tantamount to her downfall....These Chinese manners are the natural expression of a way of life in which individual feelings must be subordinated to the requirements of the group; sex and all activities associated with it must be restricted to the compartments in life in which it is socially appropriate....To a Chinese in love, love occupies a place among other considerations, especially his obligation to his parents. An American asks, 'How does my heart feel?' A Chinese asks, 'What will other people say?'"

MEDIA STEREOTYPES

In the media, Chinese American men are portrayed as feminine or inhuman. If one thinks of all the Asian television and movie actors, one gets a fairly accurate perception of the role models that have been offered to Chinese American men. There is the Charlie Chan type of plump, effeminate, bumbling detective with long fingernails and a soft voice—non-aggressive and mysterious. Or there are the cooks such as Hop Sing in "Bonanza" who yells and panics at the slightest provocation. Or there are the Chinese who lurk in the darkness creating treachery, danger, and death, such as Dr. Fu Manchu. Neither Charlie Chan nor Fu Manchu were played by Chinese actors, nor was their pronunciation of the English language an accurate portrayal of the ways Chinese speak English.

Later the film "The Good Earth," based on the novel by Pearl Buck, portrayed Chinese in a different light, although the effect was still patronizing. The Chinese were perceived as childlike, superstitious, and ignorant; they came in hordes, they were heathens, criminals, or drug addicts.

Given this stereotype, Hollywood moved on to showcase its white actors and actresses as missionaries who were held captive by Chinese hordes or who protected some Chinese from others. More recently there is the kung fu model (which is attractive to some Chinese American men because of the component of power). It recognizes that the Asian male has internal anger about the racism, but implies he cannot release it unless he is completely out of control. In the meantime he tries to appease his oppressors, hoping they will stop oppressing him.

The portrayal of these men's relation to white women is particularly racist. Hop Sing is the prototypical houseboy. The "boy," who in reality is in his late fifties, is never a sexual threat to any man. Because Chinese American men were historically excluded from typically male professions, many of them took jobs as houseboys. They were accepted by U.S. men because, unlike the black servant who could be sexually threatening, they were not perceived as a threat to white women.

Even today, the Bruce Lee kung fu model perpetuates the stereotype of social ineptness around white women, and in his relations with Chinese women the ultimate compliment he receives is that he is "just like a brother" to her. American women in the films typically overpower the Chinese man with their sexuality. The man's only defense is to be embarrassed by the overtures of the woman, and when taunted by white males, he is allowed to show anger and retaliate only after he suffers blatant oppression. The issue is not one of physical violence, but of sexual emasculation.

PULLED BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

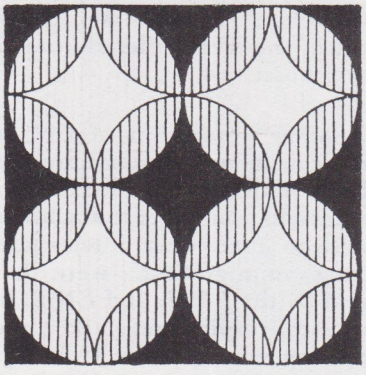
Because U.S. cultural patterns define manhood by body type, penis size, facial and body hair, physical prowess, verbal ability, and aggressiveness, the Chinese American male faces many conflicts that are the result of two cultural systems in conflict. Most white American men have a sense of brotherhood as they are developing muscles, body hair, and upper body strength; there is a mutual admiration of bodies, body development, and sexuality. This mirroring and affirmation serve to inform them of their manhood. Yet, although third- and fourth-generation Chinese American men tend to be physically comparable in size to white U.S. men, the Chinese American men carry over an internalized picture of themselves as small and unathletic, especially in their upper bodies. Pictures in the media reinforce this.

Historically the method of mating in the Chinese culture is to have the marriage arranged by the parents. Parents survey the likely candidates keeping in mind class status, attractiveness, and personality, and then a mate is chosen. This method is still practiced in the U.S. to some extent. Because the Chinese are trained at an early age to be adaptable and to honor their parents, and because the parents are perceptive about the likes and dislikes of their children, the method often works. All the subtleties of Chinese culture are passed down to the children so the bride and groom have much knowledge of the behavior of Chinese males and females at the time of marriage. This of course enhances success.

The problem in the U.S. today for those who choose to continue this method of finding a mate is that most Chinese Americans who are upwardly mobile have moved out of Chinatown and are isolated in white suburban communities. The parents, having brought their children into white neighborhoods, are confused about how much Chinese culture, language, and customs should be taught to their children. To this day, the question of whether a Chinese mate should be found stirs much controversy.

As a result, Chinese Americans who grow up isolated in white neighborhoods carry on the same debate themselves. Are we white or are we Chinese? Or how much of each? Most of us take on the task of being both Chinese and white. We must adopt white patterns to survive the schools; we must maintain Chinese cultural patterns to obtain our parents' love and respect. These patterns include asexuality. During adolescence, when whites learn how to find a mate through dancing, flirting, and sexual exploration, Chinese American parents tend to encounter internal conflict. What to do, who to trust, with respect to sexual exploration which occurs in a white school.

Many Chinese American parents deny their children the right to explore sexually, or at best communicate their terror of sex to their children. Many of the intellectual parents demand that any male-female relationship cannot begin until the children become academically successful. They also expect that when the children have become of age to find a mate, the parent will have a role in choosing. From the adolescent's point of view, the conflict is between parental approval and the



right to acculturate into white society. Those who remain loyal to their parents often find a mate quite late in life—their learning about U.S. social customs has been delayed several years past adolescence and by then the racism of society makes it difficult for them to assert their sexuality. Then their option is to reject their parents and Chinese culture and suffer the consequences of severe social distancing between parents and children.

Most Chinese Americans try to follow a middle line—to honor their parents and at the same time to explore U.S. society. Generally, conflicts occur with Chinese American parents and children at adolescence and later with the Chinese American man and U.S. society when he tries to find a mate. A sexual identity is needed for Chinese American males.

CULTURAL PATTERNS

The racial stereotypes have many historical roots. The self-reliant pattern is one example. Chinese American men were not allowed to join unions; their livelihood depended on being able to accept work which was rejected by other U.S. males. If they accepted self-reliant jobs such as being restaurant owners or laundry owners, they were exempt from the exclusion acts and so were able to bring wives and children to the U.S. In essence, via internalized classism and rejection by the U.S. working class, they were pushed away from the blue-collar working class. The Chinese American man

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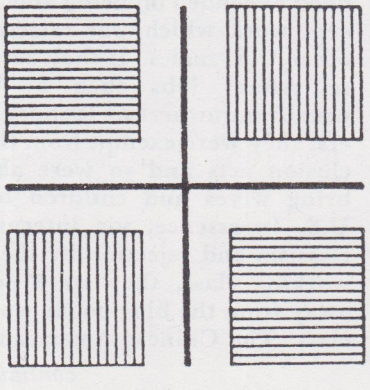
is therefore patterned self-reliant because the U.S. offered him no other choice.

Another perception of Chinese American men is that we are considered quiet and non-assertive. We have to remember that Chinese American men were interrogated during immigration, were harrassed by the F.B.I. and I.N.S. for suspected espionage, and have been oppressed by the U.S. legal system repeatedly. Another factor is the language barrier. Despite having overcome many internal barriers to learn to speak English without an Asian accent, they are still perceived by many USers as quiet. The result can be that Chinese Americans feel a need to overcompensate, to speak just for the sake of breaking the stereotype, but this becomes just another trap—to spend your entire life contradicting stereotypes.

The outward mannerisms of quietness, politeness, self-reliance, and lack of expression or verbal ability are all manifestations of the oppression. These patterns are and have been pro-survival. To survive the persecution, to move quietly forward, to succeed in the U.S., to bring our families from China, we have had to be inconspicuous, we have had to not show anger, we have had to accept gracefully work that other men would reject for its lack of "manliness." We have had to survive in extreme isolation and deny our feelings. And we have had to pretend in front of our children that racism does not exist. The power of the oppression lies in the obscuring of the information



that we are the victims of systematic mistreatment. As we begin to expose the racism, it will lose its power.

Our exposure to two very different cultures also gives us special insight. Each culture takes its own values for granted, assuming that there is no other possibility. Unlike people who were always part of one culture, however, we do not mistake a choice of a specific cultural pattern as the complete picture of reality.

TAKING PRIDE

The oppression of Chinese American men is a pattern, just like any other pattern. It is predictable and it will try to repeat itself. The process of moving away from this pattern begins with understanding the racism, its mechanisms. Part of this understanding is that the past patterns are intimately interwoven with the oppressive patterns of the present. It is important for Chinese Americans to take pride in our parents and family, to recognize that within the cultural structure that our parents came from, they are functioning well and have a certain wisdom that we cannot learn from the U.S. mainstream culture. At the same time, Chinese American men today are transitional persons and our parents' cultural values do not fit with our whole exposure to life in the U.S. Precisely because we are pioneers, the work of defining new values, new art, new literature, and new music is our opportunity.

There are several advantages to being a Chinese American man. Among my friends there is a sense of honesty and realism. In solving problems, there is no pretentiousness—we provide an accurate picture of the situation. With this sense of reality comes a trust and solidness, because we come from a heritage of survival where clear proof of our accomplishments was the only way to success. The style in which we have operated has often been without fanfare, words carefully chosen, actions considered to be more significant. Our loyalty has been demonstrated through action; we have produced in situations where others have made excuses. In this way we are known for acting on our own thinking.

It is important to realize that, as victims of racism, we are not alone. The pressures of assimilation have affected every member of U.S. society. It is just because of our obvious physical differences that we have been scapegoated. Because of this pressure to assimilate, most white immigrants have fears of looking or acting differently. The pressures they face to conform in looks, in manhood, in white beauty standards, and in class status have been intense. USers, in general, have been deeply hurt by the discrepancy between their actual lives and the ideal of the American dream. It is difficult and painful for each of us to accept the fact that at one time our parents or grandparents had broken accents or could not speak English, lived in poverty, were a minority, embarrassed the neighbors, or many other differences that are smoothed over, obliterated and forgotten in this compulsion to assimilate to the American ideal. The media provide this distortion of reality and project it worldwide so that people outside the U.S. assume a level of prosperity, opportunity, equality, and homogeneity that is, in fact, an illusion. This is an expensive illusion, because to maintain this illusion we must deny our sense of self. To maintain this illusion, we must follow styles set by current fiction, movies, and radio; we must follow the advice of advertisements, and we must keep secret the ways we deviate from the ideal created by the media. As people of color, Chinese American men can never conform to this ideal, and the fears of nonconformity have been passed on to us in the form of racial emasculation.

As Chinese American men our masculinity is intact. Our self-worth is less attached to social

values culturally defined by U.S. society. As we free ourselves, we will have more clear choices than the men of the assimilated U.S. mainstream—we can take pride fully in our Chinese heritage as well as our U.S. heritage. This richness is the reward of having survived the oppression. Because of the oppression, Chinese American men have remained free of some of the traditional male patterns of western culture. We have been oppressed economically, and when allowed to work, did many jobs that U.S. men typically feel they cannot do. Housework, taking care of children, cooking, cleaning, being quiet, listening well, and being nonthreatening are some of the qualities that Chinese American men have mastered for many generations. As husbands, we are responsible, hardworking men. One of our cultural values is to be situation-oriented; we have always searched for solutions which would benefit not only ourselves but also our entire environment. Thus we have an appreciation of the harmony in our surroundings, the beauty of nature, and the power of unity. It is therefore an honor for us to be an ally for others.

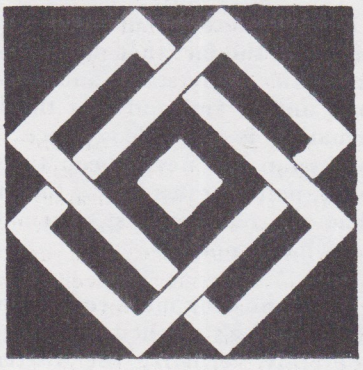
Despite the lack of financial support, Chinese Americans are moving quickly to create art, literature, and music. Children's writers, artists, playwrights, comedians, and entertainers are presently creating honest expressions of themselves. To bring the shame of denial of feelings out in the open has served as a way of scorning past humiliation. The most exciting feature of this new trend is that the art, music, and literature is very personal; the performers transcend their professionalism to create an atmosphere of home. Perhaps the struggle between being ourselves and assimilating has allowed us to be more truthful with ourselves. Painful emotions are not withheld, nor is the heart. In rediscovering who we are, we Chinese American men are finding out that we are actually more male than we realized.

Part of the internalized oppression of Chinese American men is an urgency to redefine Chinese American identity. Some of us say we are not assimilationist and we are not traditionally Chinese. The distress leads us to jump into some other role, to run away from the identity crisis. Many of us become angry and turn this anger inward: "If I'm not Chinese and I'm not American, then who am I?" I think it would be a mistake to propose another definition of our identity, because this would become another stereotype. Perhaps one of the lessons of assimilation is that we do not need to be anyone else than who we already are. Our identity will be revealed as more of us begin to write and share our actual life experiences and feelings. The isolation and shame has made us feel as if our experience is peculiar to ourselves, but in reality there are many common threads.

COUNSELING CHINESE AMERICAN MEN

The first step in counseling Chinese American men begins with information about our cultural patterns. I believe that without the information it is difficult for our counselors to not push us to assimilate, then give us directions to be aggressive, verbal, and visible. These directions may be correct in the future, but at first we must remember that we are invalidated daily for who we are right now. Counselors must work on seeing how wonderful we are already and appreciating the battles we have fought against racism; they must be correctly informed of the outside oppression and realize that one cultural pattern is not necessarily better than another. Counselors must begin to ask themselves what is restimulating about someone who is quiet, someone who cannot speak English, who eats different foods, and who looks different. The main obstacles for counselors are their own feelings about Chinese American patterns.

For most of my white friends, I am the first Chinese American man they have gotten to know. This



trend will most likely continue, because in the U.S., Asians comprise only two percent of the population. Most USers are embarrassed to approach Chinese American men because we are often perceived as quiet. We have many nonverbal expressions of communication which can be powerful. I never really learned Chinese, and yet, I can often guess what Chinese people are communicating by their facial expressions, body posture, eye contact, and what they don't say. These actions are just as important and expressive as the USer's verbal communication. Yet the non-Asian counselor is often restimulated by such quietness, and this prevents the counselor from being effective.

To begin to establish safety, the counselor must be able to help the Chinese American man look at the fact that his material is rooted in an oppressive system. The power of this is that the Chinese American man begins to trust the counselor, begins to believe that the counselor has enough resource to possibly understand the client's position, and when the oppressiveness is clarified, the Chinese American man begins to not blame himself for his inability to step out of his patterns. For most counselors in RC, this first step has not been successfully carried out. So both counselor and client get hooked into powerlessness—the Chinese American man not believing the counselor understands, and the counselor sensing that something isn't working, but not knowing what.

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I have found it useful to discharge on the fact that my counselor doesn't understand and that I don't understand and that the information is concealed. Since the oppression has never been talked about, neither of us knows for sure what mistreatment is systematic and what is not.

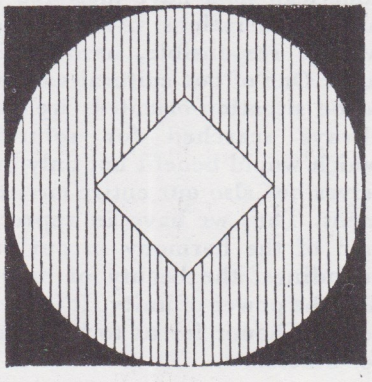
The counselor must realize that often I haven't reached the stage to coherently verbalize the distress. This nonverbalization is where to begin, and as I begin to move out of this and express myself, I often feel alone and isolated—the feeling is that it is much easier to pretend that there is no racism. Harvey has often described the situation where Third Worlders are asked what to do about the racism, and there is a lot of fear discharged. In daily life I am constantly invalidated for not being able to describe what I want or need or how the racism should be interrupted. This takes on the form of "Why don't you say something?" or "When you're ready to behave properly and tell me what's bothering you, let me know." We are in the process of rewriting Chinese American history, establishing correctness, inserting facts that have been omitted. So far the system has resisted this because it is economically favorable to pretend we are a successful minority.

With regard to male-female relationships there is a built-in internalized oppression which will act to encourage Chinese Americans to become involved with non-Asians. The U.S. dominant beauty standards that have been systematically taught to all of us imply that the tall white man or the blonde white female are the ideal. For Chinese American women, assimilation implies that because Chinese American men are perceived as less masculine, stereotyped as small and socially inept, their patterns will tend to seek out white males. The white males tend to stereotype Asian females as submissive and exotic, and white males with sexual insecurity and dominance patterns may seek out Asian women because of this stereotype. Similarly, Chinese American men, in attempting to assimilate, may seek white women as a vehicle to combat their feelings of social ineptness. At present more than fifty percent of all Asian American marriages are intercultural. I believe that internalized oppression is an important factor in the high rates of outmarriage.

One of our goals is to increase the number of choices Chinese Americans have in deciding how to live in the U.S. The racism has quietly funneled us into certain kinds of jobs, certain kinds of male-female relationships, and certain ways we perceive ourselves. Even within counseling, a quiet, nonverbal teacher is perceived as less effective than a dramatic, entertaining, charismatic teacher.

As we eliminate racism we will have a chance to set out what is Chinese American culture and what are the distresses that have been passed on that we confuse with culture. As all oppressed groups do this, we will have the rich opportunity to become close to all the different peoples of the world.

Feng Mao



PROGRESS REPORT ON ASIAN MEN'S ACTIVITIES

Although Asian men's work is embryonic, it is proceeding well and uncovering many difficulties that afflict Asian men. Asian men have been Co-Counseling and sharing experiences through several of the following activities in the past three years.

Chinese Liberation I and II. (San Francisco, California, Spring 1981 and Summer 1982) At the first International Chinese Liberation Workshop a Chinese men's group met as a topic group. Half of the group fell asleep during a demonstration. That's when we figured out that heavy distress interferes with Chinese men giving attention to each other. Our meeting the following year was dramatically different. By expecting each other to give delightful attention, profuse discharge occurred with each client, as well as by everyone in the audience. The excitement of this meeting stimulated the proposal to hold an Asian men's workshop.

Asian Men's Workshop. (San Diego, California, March 1983) As Goteti Krishnamurty said for his highlight, "This was a workshop that felt like a vacation." Eight Asian men traveled long distances to meet at Jim Lin's house for a Spring weekend. We went grocery shopping, cooked all of our meals (mostly great Chinese food), spent long leisurely hours eating and telling stories, sung songs, snuggled, slept, played, and Co-Counseled. We looked at the oppression of Asian men, conducted counseling with supervision, and took pride in ourselves the entire weekend. We learned that a relaxed schedule and a non-authoritarian leadership style reduced competition among us.

Asian Men's Support Group. (Seattle, Washington, August 1983). Four of us met under my leadership. We spent an entire day Co-Counseling and reading articles on the oppression of Asian men. Much of the work centered on reclaiming pride in our sexual identity.

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Flaunting Asian American Manhood. (Oberlin College, Ohio, September 1983) Vincent Chin came through Oberlin so he and I conducted a workshop on campus with the above provocative title. We shared information on the oppression of Asian men, and I counseled some men on their internalized oppression. This workshop led to the first Asian men's group at Oberlin College. (An outline of the topics we discussed follows.) These activities have tremendously increased the participation of Asian men in campus activities.

In my work with Asian men I have learned several things:

1. Asian manhood is often defined by academic achievement. Encourage Asian men to counsel on their feelings around grades and report cards.

2. Asian men do suffer from many painful feelings about "nerdiness" and "wimpiness." Many Asian men try to escape those feelings by rejecting anything associated with "nerdiness" and "wimpiness." Ultimately, Asian men must be proud of those characteristics. Reject the insult; it is a mistake to reject the characteristics.

3. Asian men need to be reminded that we have anti-sexism traditions. Japanese, Chinese, East Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Hawaiian, and other Asian/Pacific men have all fought sexism. Currently, I notice that Asian men's worth is measured by which group is less sexist which only lays the groundwork for new competition and divisiveness among Asian men.

4. I love being an ally to my Asian brothers. I get so much satisfaction in supporting Asian men. I feel very powerful when I help my brothers grow and also when I contribute to relieving the oppression that contaminates our lives.

5. Asian men become more attractive to everyone when they support each other.

6. Emasculation—robbing Asian men of their sexual pride—has been a key aspect of the oppression of Asian American men. Take pride in our looks, especially where we feel inadequate.

7. When I'm with men, I notice in myself the competition to try to be a superior counselor.

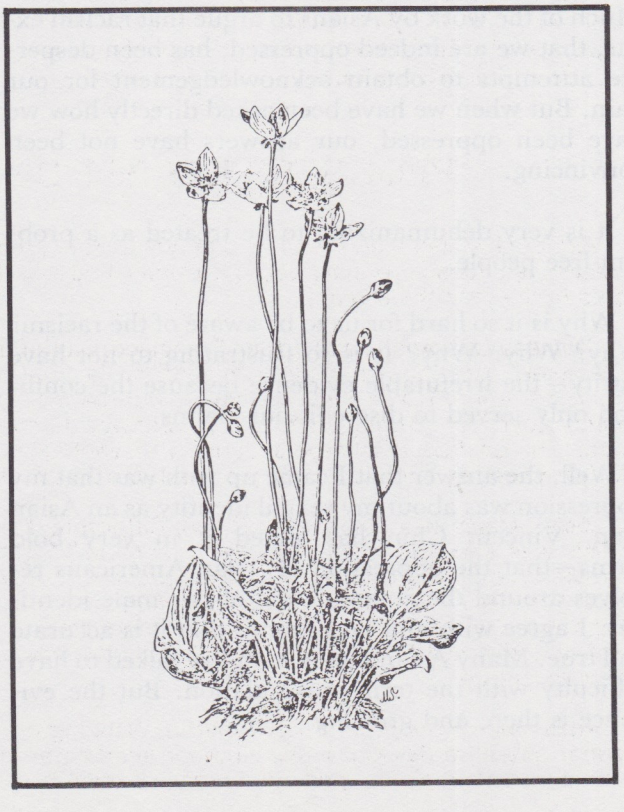
8. Listening is not valued as an accomplishment. It's not something we spend time protecting. Men feel they do not have time to listen, "to be there."

Tommy Woon
Oberlin, Ohio, USA

ASIAN MEN: Fall 1983

Outline for Group Meetings

1. Introduction: Congratulations to Us—We Manage to Get Together As Asian Men!
2. Asian Men's History
3. Moving Towards Meaningful Relationships: Practicing Self-Disclosure
4. Men Cooperating for a Change: Support, Validation, Cooperative Work and Play
5. Father-Son and Other Significant Male Relationships
6. Feelings Management for Men
7. Heterosexuality: Fun and Fear!
8. Cross-Cultural Male Relationships
9. Labor: Domestic, Intellectual, and Physical
10. Parenting
11. Homophobia: The Dividing Wedge
12. Academic Stress and Achievement
13. Interpreting Sexual Signals and Other Patterns of Nonverbal Communication



FLAUNTING ASIAN AMERICAN MANHOOD

Dear Chuck,

As you know, I've been trying to write something for at least three years to you. The Asian journal also suffers because I and other Asians have not moved out of our internalized oppression to express ourselves. That block has lasted for about eight years. I can't speak for every Asian, but my own experience tells me that our ability to express ourselves has been stifled. Deep in my heart I want people to know about me. I believe that my life is important. There are many lessons in my life.

For years when the question was asked "How have I been oppressed as an Asian?", I had very feeble responses. Other questions such as "What do I want allies to understand?" only resulted in blanks in my mind or pretentious answers to satisfy my counselors or an audience at a workshop. For a while I wondered if my blanks were caused by the absence of traumatic events. I just didn't have very significant memories of painful experiences with racism. However, I refused to believe it was because I and other Asians had escaped oppression.

The racism is the deception that Asians do not suffer or have somehow overcome racism. I have been confounded by the invisibility in racism against Asians. Everyone seems to have bought into it. Much of the work by Asians to argue that racism exists, that we are indeed oppressed, has been desperate atttempts to obtain acknowledgement for our pain. But when we have been asked directly how we have been oppressed, our answers have not been convincing.

It is very dehumanizing to be treated as a problem-free people.

Why is it so hard for us to be aware of the racism? Why? Why? Why? It is so frustrating to not have clarity—the irrefutable evidence because the confusion only served to discredit our claims.

Well, the answer that I came up with was that my oppression was about my sexual identity as an Asian man. Vincent Chin has stated it in very bold terms—that the oppression of Asian Americans revolves around the emasculation of our male identities. I agree with him and submit that it is accurate and true. Many Asian men whom I've talked to have difficulty with the term emasculation. But the evidence is there and growing.

What are the effects? What is the internalized oppression? What have I learned in counseling on our sexual identities?

Very few people have attention or information about this subject. Difficulties or opportunities to Co-Counsel with Asian men are still rare.

EMASCULATION: WHAT I'VE LEARNED

1. Emasculation seems similar to other sexual distress. We are pulled to deny it and be skeptical about its occurrence.

2. The solution is not to reject "wimpiness" and flip into rigid majority culture "manly" behavior. Our manliness has its place in flexible intelligence.

3. The subject of emasculation has not yet been discussed widely.

4. It is diffficult to be anti-sexist alone. Male support accelerates every area of re-emergence.

5. In general, men's feelings seem to be a mystery to both men and women.

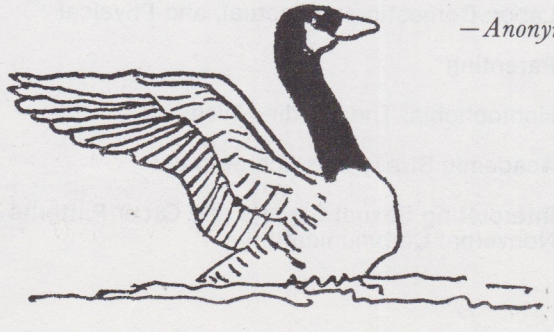
6. Men have been more helpful to me once I expose its nature.

7. Warm attention from Asian men is a powerful contradiction in this work.

8. My sexual inhibition came from a rigid sense of honor. For example, my reticence in aggressive sexual behavior stemmed from a fear that my "safeness" for women (occasionally interpreted as wimpiness) was patterned. Many women of course preferred me this way.

9. Women encouraging me to be sexual is helpful! Fear of being sexual inhibits much expression of caring.

—Anonymous



An Interview with Tim Kahn

Tell us a bit about growing up as a Jew.

I was born in Putney, Southwest London (a non-Jewish area), and lived there until I was seventeen. I have one brother, Peter, who is older than I am. My Jewish religious life involved lighting candles, going to synagogue twice a year, celebrating Chanukah and going to Jewish assembly at school.

We kept our Jewishness to ourselves and never talked to others about it. It was as if Jewishness (religion) was one of those subjects, like sex and politics, that you didn't talk about. But, in fact, I think my family didn't want other people to think we were different, so we kept it quiet.

We didn't live an overtly Jewish life, but, looking back on my childhood, I see myself as having grown up in a very Jewish family.

This interview is about you as a Jewish man. Let's hear what you liked about your dad.

He was kind, gentle, had a big human streak, always had a kind heart for everybody. I remember he would come up every night and ask me questions—he would call them secrets, but they would be like, "When was the Battle of Hastings?" I liked that. His are the kinds of qualities other people appreciate about me.

Any negatives about him?

Yes, the scaredness, a haze that is around. As a child I was told, "Don't talk to strangers," don't be open: always do things for people, go to extremes to ingratiate yourself with them. Almost like, you have to earn your place, you don't get one as a right. You have to earn it by doing things, being loved for what you do, not for who you are. These are some of the negatives.

What else?

My dad being the pacifier. A number of times when I was brave enough to make a big scene, when I would be in tears and my mum would be shouting and crying, my dad would say to my mum, "There, there, he doesn't mean it." The family couldn't cope with bad feelings. If anybody got upset—and it was only really my mum who was allowed to—then all the energy was put into quieting them down and smoothing it over. I find myself doing that a lot with people who are angry now.

Keeping things quiet?

Yes.

As you were growing up, what qualities did you admire in yourself as a man and in other men?

I looked for men who were gentle, intellectual, and stimulating—whom I could respect.

It sounds like Tim Kahn!

I get annoyed with some of those things I used to like about being a man—gentleness, kindness. It's part of that Jewish image within the context of meekness.

What other qualities are you striving for?

I want to be firmer, able to say no. When people shout at me, not just collapse under the sofa but "take it like a man." Also, not to feel so scared all the time. Now I have a new job, it will involve speaking at conferences—I still get nervous about things like that. I hate waking up at five o-clock and feeling tense and nervous about things and not being able to sleep.

You are certainly working in the right direction. Give us some other examples of the fine moves you are making in your life.

Well, I'm excited about my new job—working full-time in the Jewish community. It's quite different from the social work I've been doing. Doing lots of decorating work in the flat Lia and I live in, from plastering to carpentry to electrical work. It's very different from the expectations on me as a child.

I like the human way I relate to people. I make friends easily and people tend to get to like me quickly. I like the way that I am beginning to stick up for myself more and speak my mind.

Thank you for speaking to me, Tim.

What I Am Learning From My Jewish Men's Group

I am a Jewish man. It has been hard for me to accept and feel good about being either Jewish or male. I wanted to get together with other Jewish men and talk about our experiences. My hope was that I would feel a strong sense of commonality, that there would be a group where I felt understood.

I mentioned the idea of a Jewish men's group to friends, and several seemed interested. A date was set for a first meeting. Eight of us got together; all of them were my friends but very few of them knew each other.

We now have met ten times and become a group of seven. I am excited by our discussions. We've talked about our family histories, our relationships with Jewish women and with non-Jews, our growing up Jewish, our participation in the Jewish community, and our present connectedness to Jewish traditions and our Jewish identity.

I'd like to share three things that I've been thinking about as a result of participation in this group.

1. There is a tradition, based on historical necessity, of Jewish men accomodating in order to survive. Jewish men, trying to make livings in cultures where they were persecuted and oppressed, did whatever they could to be agreeable to the non-Jews who had power over their lives. Although Jews in the United States as a group are no longer powerless because of economic dependency, the need for acceptance continues to keep this old pattern of behavior alive. The historical powerlessness of Jewish men in the business world has generated two responses: aggressiveness or acquiescence.

I tend to acquiesce, accomodate, and appease other people. Being agreeable, easy to give up what I want so that other people can get what they want, and flexible have usually been positively reinforced behaviors but to my detriment. I now recognize how this tendency of mine is related to my being Jewish. I've since asked my friends to encourage me to disagree, say what I want, and negotiate from there.

2. Most Jews in the United States were born in cities and continued to live in cities or moved to suburbs that had high concentrations of Jews and access to the Jewish cultural activities of the cities. Both my parents and I grew up in small towns in the United States where the Jewish community was small and there was little access to Jewish culture. This is an uncommon experience. Being Jewish, I felt different from the non-Jews who were my friends when I was a child.

My family's location has accentuated my feelings of being different. My parents had fewer Jewish traditions to share with me because they grew up isolated from other Jews. At college and living in Boston, I felt different from all of the Jews whose experiences with Jewish delicatessens, community centers, activities, culture, and large populations were so foreign to me. Growing up in a small town has made me feel like I didn't know as much about being Jewish, like I was less of a Jew.

The Jewish men's group, by providing me with the opportunity to explore my being raised as a rural Jew, has helped me to appreciate the validity of and be comfortable with the differences in my experience from that of urban Jews.

3. I've been able to get inside my father's shoes and understand how the combination of his being the son of an immigrant to the United States, growing up during the depression, and being a young man during the Holocaust directed my dad towards being very concerned about money. My father was very involved in making and saving money when I was growing up. He would switch his savings between savings accounts, stocks, bonds, life insurance policies, and real estate, trying to best protect his money. I used to resent what I perceived as my father's obsession with money; I was angry that my dad had so little time to be with me. I am better understanding my dad's choices – that his love for his family was channeled into generating and preserving money, which represented safety or security. As a stranger in a foreign country who grew up aware of the suffering caused by the depression and the danger in beng Jewish highlighted by the Holocaust, economic security was considered vital for survival. Now that my anger is no longer blinding my understanding, I can now accept my dad's motivation and love him for doing so much to provide for our family's economic well-being.

The Jewish men's group has provided me with a place to explore myself and open myself to others in new and growthful ways. There has been a strong sense of commonality and mutual understanding but also the acknowledgement that Jewish men are very different from one another and have a great variety of individual life experiences. It has been especially important for me to be in a group with dual issues, Judaism and masculinity; it has afforded me greater safety through supportiveness and common explorations to examine myself as a Jewish man.

Michael Markovits
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

F.K.

VETS

What a delight to hear from four other vets plus a counselor who works with vets and a request for my mini-newsletter from an RC Community librarian!

Four of the five of us were in during Vietnam. Charles Thiesen and Bob Galford served in the Army in Nam, Jim Driscoll was a Marine officer serving near Danang, and Tony Switzer made two Med cruises on the USS Forrestal. Gene King served in the Army Air Force from 1942-45 (Europe and North Africa).

It is hard to see any trends in the experience of five vets so mostly I will report some of the highlights of questions that I posed.

What do you recall with pride?

—Serving my country

—Being in great shape

—Taking good care of my men

—I'm able to survive tremendously difficult experiences; I can reach in and draw on a reserve so deep and so powerful that it appears bottomless.

—I take pride as a man in the way we all related within our units, men caring for men...I learned a lot about respecting men.

—Wearing my uniform home on leave

—In boot camp I was in the color guard. It was thrilling at times.

—The long and trusting relationships with men in my squadron

—Associations with people of places and cultures other than my own

—My courage and clear thinking in the face of danger

—Attending synagogue in Morocco, Algeria, France ...and being welcomed as a brother and a son by Jews I did not know and would never see again.

What would you rather forget?

—Air raids

—Saturation bombing of cities

—Children pimping for their older sisters and mothers

—Young, lovely, innocent women prostituting themselves

—Arab men and women tortured and beaten by the French colonial police

—I would like to forget that somehow I never got around to seeing my best friend in my unit after we got out. He lost his leg...died...before I ever saw him again.

—All the times I was drunk and alone in the night, finding my way back to the barracks. I did some extraordinarily embarrassing things.

—Feelings of cowardice, failure

—Death around me

—My career as a heavy drinker and whoremonger

—Calling non-USers "gooks"

—Acting contemptuous, insulting toward people of other countries and their cultures.

How much have you counseled on your military experience? Vets or non-vets?

—One session with you

—Spots in sessions

—Perhaps five hours total on a boot camp experience of being almost intentionally drowned by the swimming instructor

—Vet or non-vet is less important than skill of the counselor

—Have counseled very little

—Seems to be a vacuum of curiosity in the RC Community about military activities

—I am not feeling safe enough with many people to work on it

—Material from Vietnam snuck up on me and I worked on it—fear particularly—very effectively

—Occasionally worked on feelings about dead friends but not much

—A vet who was not in Vietnam in our Community but his experience doesn't seem to apply to my material

—I have clienteed very little during eight years in RC, perhaps ten hours with little discharge

—I have found no counselor who was able to counsel me without their distress getting in the way.

How did military service help you in later life?

—War has stimulated a resolve to assist in preventing imperialist wars

—Knowlege and understanding of other places, peoples, and cultures

—Broadened my vision of the world

—I glimpsed my strength and power

—Learned that I could hold my own in the world

—Probably have to counsel on this a great deal before I can be clear about how my service helped me

—Perspective of myself as a world citizen. I no longer believe in or support nationalism

—GI Bill

—Solid, unchallengeable base as a disarmament activist.

continued...

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

continued. . .

How did military service hinder you in later life?

—Wasted three years in service and seven years getting over it

—The immense pain and guilt I absorbed

—For several years I used all manner of drugs, including alcohol, to numb myself

—Numbness in the face of death, destruction, pain, and hurt

—Refusal, aloofness, avoidance of anything that seems like, may lead to or smacks of controversy, argument, or fighting

—After I left the army I avoided anything that would restimulate fear at all, I took almost no risks and lived on part-time jobs and unemployment rather than push against my feelings about myself

—My experiences with prostitutes laid on new layers of sexism and added to my confusion about sexuality

—I learned to consume alcohol as a pain killer.

What misconception about military people would you like to clear up for non-veterans?

—When a person is in the military, he or she is wholly owned by the government. The military has the "right" to kill you if it chooses

—Viet vet equals drug-crazed killer

—Assumption that soldiers like shooting, acting tough, and being violent

—Enlisted men are crude, not too smart, incompetent

—Inhuman stereotype: vets are as human as anyone else

—That veterans of Vietnam are more responsible for that horror than were the people who stayed home.

This has been wonderful to type this up—the diversity of five RC vets is surprising. I feel a pull to identify other vets in our Communities and get together if only through a newsletter.

I propose that each of us contact some other RC vets and invite them into our fledgling network. I plan to write to the ARPs in the Los Angeles and Bay Area Communities to ask them to pass the word to all the teachers in their Areas. If you are at a workshop, propose a support group or topic group for vets.

Only one of us reports counseling on military experiences more than a paltry amount. What can we do to change this? Obviously, we can make the decision to devote sessions to it. If good attention is a problem, perhaps we can detail for our counselors exactly what we require from them—they are as unaccustomed to counseling us as we are to not being counseled well.

That sounds like a good question to consider: What do you need as client in order to discharge satisfactorily on military material?

I look forward to compiling a second vets letter. In order to do that I need to hear from you and (hopefully) many others.

Tony Switzer
Austin, Texas, USA

P.S. One more question: I am drawn to reading poetry of Vietnam vets and other accounts that are gruesome and horrible. Do others share that compulsion? What is that all about?

VETERANS INFORMATION COORDINATOR

I am information coordinator for veterans.

There is great isolation among vets. On second thought, the isolation is greater between us and the rest of society. Not many people are capable of listening to us when we rejoin society—they are too restimulated.

I feel that RC vets may be able to share important information with the wider RC Community regarding the mechanism of societal oppression of men.

Will any vets please write to me, including answering the following:

1) What was your rank or grade? Where did you serve? In what branch?

2) What from your service do you recall with pride?

3) What incident from your service would you rather forget?

4) How much have you counseled on your military service? Do you prefer veterans or non-veterans as counselor when you work on military material?

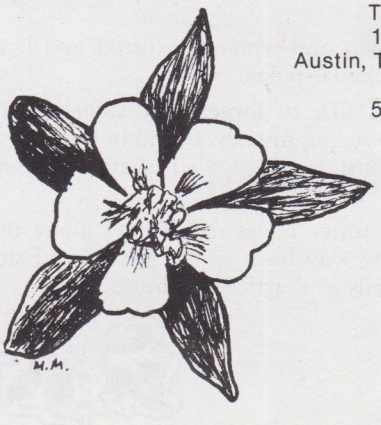
5) How has military service helped you in later life? How has it hindered you?

6) What misconceptions about the military would you like to correct for non-veterans?

Veterans send name and address to me along with $1.00 for mailing costs.

I commit myself to a minimum of eighteen months as vets information coordinator and set a goal of at least four RC vets newsletters in that time.

Tony Switzer
1616 W. 10th
Austin, Texas 78703
USA
512-473-3294



UPWARDLY MOBILE WORKING CLASS

As we counselled, it became apparent how much shame we had in our lives. Not only shame about being working class, having been brought up with the image of working class as failure, but also shame as "upwardly mobile" of being separate from our backgrounds and our families, and the isolation that has left us with.

For many of us, the shame has manipulated us so that we simulate our parents' lives by working ourselves into the ground. They did it often to survive; we seem to do it through shame.

Many of us were told by our parents that "we would get the education they didn't," "a good comfortable life," and that also seemed to mean "you will grow away from us and be ashamed of us." Our parents were actually saying that they wanted us to grow up with choices and enough slack to enjoy them. The only models they had were middle-class ones, so they aimed us there.

For us working-class men to have achieved what we have in our lives, we have had to compromise, accept loneliness, and mistrust most of the people around us. We need to move out and take pride in our achievements as working-class men, take pride in our backgrounds and treat ourselves well, and not apologise for our success by working ourselves harder than is good for us.

We are the only group *at the moment* with the understanding of other working people's lives and enough slack and contact to be a major force for working people. Let's unleash all our common sense, straight-forwardness and organising skills, discharge our shame, use our fine thinking and be that force.

Trefor Lloyd
reprinted from the Southern England
RC Men's Newsletter No. 8

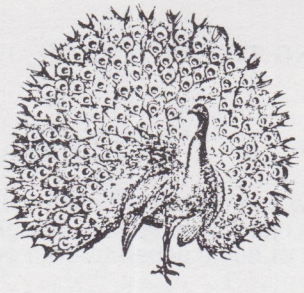
RESPECT YOUNG MALES

Something I'd like to say to men in RC is to be aware of young people, including young males. At workshops and in classes, men have tried to connect with me in a weird way by telling me about how great it is to be a man and how lucky I am to be a male in RC. I find the unaware clienting along the theme of "Here's what you've got to look forward to..." the hardest. When there's an equal exchange of dreams and hopes for the world and our lives, that's real. That's connecting in a human, respectful way. Otherwise, it's adultism. The way I see things isn't necessarily the way others—female or male, younger or older, left-handed, right-handed, or ambidextrous—will see them, although there may be common ground between us.

Bill
Albany, New York, USA

BY ELLIE MENZIES

The Oppression of Singles



Being single in the United States today is, for many of us, painful and confusing. We are bombarded by messages glorifying heterosexual romance. We see young couples ecstatically bounding in slow motion toward promised bliss; so we use toothpaste that promises unlimited, mint-fresh kisses. And why not? Slow motion ecstasy looks great after spending another Saturday night alone, watching "Love Boat" on TV.

Certainly, it is very human to want to be close to people. It is also important that people make life-long commitments to each other. Human, long-term, loving commitments are vital to the raising of the generations. Singles often don't have the amount of closeness or long-term support that we need. In some ways, this is a hurt or an obstacle to our full enjoyment of life. It is important to point out, however, that we suffer from more than loneliness – we are actively oppressed by society.

How This Oppression Works

The oppression of singles is not as vicious, for the most part, as that suffered by many other target groups, but it is both a social and an economic fact. From my own experience I know that prospective educational administrators are told that school boards prefer married principals and superintendents. Single teachers have to be more careful than marrieds in how they dress, speak, and show affection to their students. The oppression is particularly nasty when combined with ageism and sexism. Single women are discriminated against in lending, credit, and employment. The older we get, the "worse" it is to be single. Single people are often excluded from friendship circles formed by couples.

Even though single people make up a large proportion of the population, society as a whole distrusts them. Some stereotypical images of singles are: weird, sex offender, loser, messed-up, eccentric, playboy, woman of loose morals, irresponsible, etc. While it is possible to find single people who fit any of these categories, the categories themselves are oppressive or blaming, and are applied with too broad a brush. Some of the urgency, or even panic, with which many singles approach finding a mate, comes from a desire to escape the weight of the oppression – not an unnoble desire. Years of hearing remarks made about "old maids, dirty old men, poor Uncle John," etc. add to the confusion and terror around being single.

All the stereotypes of singles are incorrect. Single people are warm, caring men and woman who are unmated by choice, death, distress, or chance. In many cases, they are people who have been strong enough or principled enough to avoid marriages of convenience. They are holding out for their vision of love and caring, and in the process, are developing their own special strengths.

Effect of Early Hurts

For many single people, the difficulties caused by this oppression are complicated by fears of being perceived as "socially different." These feelings often are associated with the experience of being a teenager in the U.S. school system. It is important to understand that adolescent peer pressure to conform originates in the distress laid on young people by adultism.

Adultism is the systematic oppression of young people by adults. This happens when adults fail to give young people respect, fail to encourage their natural power, assume lack of knowledge to be an inability to reason, or insist that adult wants take precedence over the child's. After years of being mistreated at school and in their families, it is understandable that young people are pulled to act out this distress in attempts to come to grips with it. This often takes the forms of criticism or ridicule; the internalized oppression picks up any cue, any difference among other young people as a handle on which to hang the distress.

The results of the internalized oppression combine with the already-learned stereotypes of the socially unsuccessful single to create the enormous pressure encountered in schools to look and act "normal." To be really "normal," of course, was very difficult and involved not only attention to dress and posture, hairstyle and slang, but also a girl friend or boy friend of the right type, and, in a few months or years, a "steady." Not only was it dangerous to be too different, but it was even dangerous to associate too closely with those who were different.

Only a few were very successful at being "normal," and even fewer felt secure in their success. Of course, the degree to which people were affected by the experience depended on their earlier hurts. Few people were raised with enough tenderness and respect that their self-esteem enabled them to cheerfully disregard the distress at school. Many were forced to put most of their attention to the struggle to be liked and to appear "normal." Everyone tried their hardest to do what was right – both the successful and the unsuccessful, the bully and the bullied. Even the oppressive behavior was an attempt to struggle against the internalized feelings of worthlessness.

To summarize, the reason being single is so terrifying for many people is the combination of the specific oppression of single people with the old terror of being different. Secondly, although it may feel otherwise, each of us did a noble job of growing up in the face of great distress, and deserves neither blame nor contempt. We deserve applause!

Counseling on Singles Issues

Counseling on singles issues has had its strong and weak areas.

First, excellent counseling has been done on sexuality, especially since we found the reliable technique of discharging exhaustively on the earliest memory connected in any way with sex and then proceeding to the next earliest memory. RCers who have stayed with this discharge have reported leaps in their abilities to think about their friends and lovers.

Second, our early understanding of the difference between people and the patterns they wear has set the basis for recent sharp advances in our thinking and counseling about relationships. Harvey Jackins demonstrated in several workshops this year that when two people (he chose a man and a woman) take time to find out about each other and are completely honest in answering each other's questions, they are likely to fall in love in a short time. We've known in theory that this must happen if two people can see past each other's patterns, so it was exciting to hear that practice has caught up with theory in this area.

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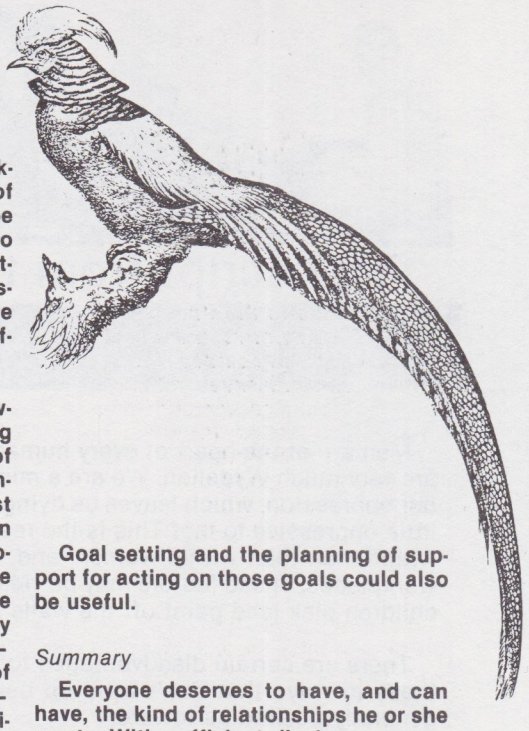

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A number of other people have done new thinking on the woman/man relationship (though also applicable to other relationships). For instance, Tim Jackins has held out the possibility that two people could look at and discharge on the expectations that they brought to a relationship, and then reach agreement on which expectations were realistic and ought to be fulfilled.

Third, many people have not counseled on this oppression. There is a society-wide pool of distress around being single that makes it difficult for counselors to give much attention to this distress. Not many people wear "singleness" brightly and proudly or think to model it that way for their single clients.

What techniques might be useful in counseling on being single? Approaching it as internalized oppression is useful. One can ask the questions, "What do you like about being single?" and "What can't you stand about being single?" Also useful is the direction of complete appreciation: "It's great to be me and single!" or "Single!"

Counselors can also encourage the single client to discharge directly on what it has been like to be single, telling all the details. They can also remember their earliest memories of the oppression of singles, in particular discharging the confusion of misinformation by asking relentless questions. Memories of early dating or non-dating may also be fruitful. Remember, when counselor, to be flexible! If your client is sinking, lighten up. For some people, three-way sessions or small groups will provide the safety or perspective necessary for effective counseling in this area.

Fourth, in the last year, I have led several workshop support groups on finding a mate. (Note: This is not a concern of every single person, even though it is important to many.) In these groups almost everyone could discharge heavily on feeling attractive. Probably very few people believe themselves attractive enough. Some people only needed to be told over and over how attractive they were. Others needed to act attractive – in posture, expression, and tone of voice. For instance, "Hi! I'm Scott!" – oozing confidence and delight. Appreciation and encouragement from the rest of the group were usually a big boost. Remember, everyone is, *in reality,* attractive. In a counseling situation, this is usually easy to see.

Sharing of successes, no matter how seemingly small, felt wonderful and brought discharge. People can often discharge their hopelessness and fear in such a context better than by attacking it head-on. It was also inspiring to hear others' successes.

Goal setting and the planning of support for acting on those goals could also be useful.

Summary

Everyone deserves to have, and can have, the kind of relationships he or she wants. With sufficient discharge, everyone can eventually think clearly in this area. Most single people experience some oppression as singles, and they don't deserve any of it. Ending the oppression of singles will be of enormous help to everyone in enabling us to think clearly about all our relationships.

Scott Beadenkopf
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
reprinted from "The Emerging Corridor"
RC newsletter

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE GROWING UP AS A MAN WITH A PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE

We were hurt.

We were systematically hurt in similar ways as a result of our physical differences. The specific areas of our hurts included: sports; girls and women; boys and men; work; and all leading to further feelings of isolation.

In sports we were hurt through the competition and the isolation, and what says it all for us is that we were the last picked, played "left out" and "who's gonna get stuck with HIM?"

We were further hurt and isolated in our relationships with girls and women by the abundance of stereotyped masculine expectations, our fear of rejection due to our physical differences, and our fear of sex. Physical barriers also got in the way of close relationships with girls and women.

In our relationships with boys and men, the same hurts and fears were there as with girls and women, as well as feelings of shame, embarrassment, our discounting the importance or relevance of our physical differences, disclaiming by others of our physical differences, and comparisons with other men and boys hurt us. But "Hey, what's wrong with you?" best sums up the feelings for us.

In our work, being physically different has resulted in not being taken seriously, job denials, patronizing attitudes, and being restricted in our own career decisions.

The place where the most hurt is clumped is around our isolation. Getting laughed at and "what's wrong with you?" led to a sense of unworthiness, while the "looking good!" standards of our society became unattainable hurdles. And this all boils down to internalized oppression.

Report from a topic group that met once at the International Workshop for People with Physical Differences, November 12-14, 1982, at Hemlock Camp in Connecticut, USA. We are John Freed, Yale Magrass, and Ben Kellman.

Transcript from the October, 1982 Men's Workshop

— Harvey Jackins
Sunday AM class

Men are at the heart of every human community because we are nearly half the population. But in a way we are very much Wygelian. We are a minority of the population by about three or four percent, mostly because of our oppression, which leaves us dying in the U.S. or Europe about 6.7 years before women. This certainly feels a little oppressive to me! This is the result of the "big-boy" conditioning creating tension illnesses much heavier within men than within women, and, in the past at least, the greater dangers of our military service and our workplaces. These factors may be yielding first place to the danger of living in an urban environment where little children pick lead paint off the walls and eat it, and the air is heavily polluted.

There are certain disadvantages to being male. We've been putting attention to these. We need to deal with these in ways that don't wind up being hopeless or lashing out at women, which are what the culture has generally pushed us toward.

There are also certain advantages; the patterns of being told that we're powerful, of being told that we're independent, of being told that we can have our own way. These have been filed down in the last couple of generations, but the Victorians used to speak of "manhood's high estate." Kipling wrote, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you. If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, yet make allowance for their doubting, too." And so on for several verses. And finally, "If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything that's in it, and, which is more, you'll be a man, my son."

Some of this special encouragement still hangs around. Whenever men and women both speak out in the same group you may notice the results of much greater encouragement to be ourselves, to, at least when we are grown, have some independence, to be able to think for ourselves.

The harshness and the cruelty and the unreasonable expectations and the lack of support we faced as boys don't quite obscure the encouragement. We have a leg up towards humannness, at least in a patterned way. We can ride the pattern a way, until we can get out of it, towards being ourselves. There is a little more of an opportunity, a little shorter jump across the chasm for us than for women, on the average. We may be able to jump the chasm by staying brave and courageous and independent while we shed the cruelty and the thoughtlessness and the oppressiveness that were pasted on to it. Most women have been shoved into the valley so far they have to do quite a bit of climbing to get up to where we start, on issues like independence and power.

Part of our role, and I think we've done well in RC on this, is to be supportive to women, to help move them into leadership, to appreciate, push, encourage, and so on. We can take great pride in this role. We can become the best supporters of women's leadership the world has ever known. Already, we can take pride for our role in supporting this marvelous group of women leaders that's emerging in RC. Look at the Joan Karps, Kathy Millers, Dorothy Stonemans, Diane Balsers, Joyce Millmans, Katie Kauffmans, and Jean Ann Phillips. These women have won their way to confidence and power and excellent modeling of leadership for all people, especially for women, in some part because we men have pulled our feet out of the muck and been supportive to them many times.

We don't have to compete with women or elbow them out of the way in order to be proud leaders ourselves. We can learn to sit back like proud fathers as we see women's leadership for all people. We have done and will continue to do the right thing for women's leadership to flourish.

I think this workshop, however, should mark a historic turning point.

It is time for Men's Communities; groups of men leaders building male Communities in whatever form they will take, parallel to and overlapping with, our regular Communities. We don't need to hold ourselves back. If some of the patterns of rigid feminism scream at us that we're dominating again, it's possible for us at this point, I think, to smile and say, "Yeah, well maybe some day we'll get over it," and go right ahead. More on this later.

I think we've made a lot of gains at overcoming the conditioning put on us against discharge. I've done four or five demonstrations now on internalized oppression between men. The women's eyes in those audiences were like dinner plates. Many commented: "I never knew men's lives were like that." Even the women who live with us, who see us 300 times a day still often have the impression that inside our heads we live in a rosy world of arrogance and ease. To see our difficulties laid out by a panel of men working on the internalized oppression shocks them. They have a different attitude afterwards. Men go into heavy discharge easily, talking about what it's been like to be a man. Being encouraged as a panel to talk about the details of their lives was enough for three or four men to put their arms around each other and sob, shake, as if they no longer had to hold back or feel handicapped about their ability to recover. We're at some kind of a turning point. It appears possible, without much effort, to reclaim our abilities to discharge freely and turn ourselves loose.

I want us to take the Men's Leaders' groups seriously. I want us to move on it quickly. It may not at first be widely understood in your Community, and you may get some flack on it. "Men Leaders' groups?" But do it. Most of our best female and male leadership is ready to assist. If you have a Dorothy Stoneman, a Kathy Miller, a Tim Jackins, or a Charlie Kreiner around, and she/he can spare the time, get her/him to work with your men's leaders' group.

I propose a four-point agenda for your Men's Leaders' group. Ask each man to speak to each of these four issues.

1) What have you been doing in the area of men's leadership?
2) What is your analysis of the situation for men in the world? Where are we? What needs doing?
3) What do you intend to do in this next period?
4) What gets in your way? (Offer people a session.)

These are questions you might want to ask on the first point, to help the person report.

What have you been doing? What have you done to reach out to men?

What have you done to build your constituency?

What have you done to get men's support groups, men's classes?

What have you done to build your influence in the wide world?

On the second part, what men's organizations are there in your town or borough or precinct? What roles does the Chamber of Commerce play? What role does the Junior Chamber of Commerce play? Are there men in there you want to rescue? What role do the men play in the church, in the synagogue? What about the basketball team, the sport's league? Where are men who can be reached? Use the resources of all the good men you have.

We don't want to pressure or hurry anyone. When a group of Wygelian leaders of whatever kind get together, they must not be under pressure....

These are places where we think out carefully how we're going to change the world. And we take steps at our own pace. Just as long as we're moving forward and thinking, we don't need reactive urgency or fear or "hurry, hurry, hurry, or the bombs will fall." If you hurry, hurry, hurry, you'll probably forget to do the right thing to keep the bombs from falling.

Do we have all the answers as to what men's RC is going to be like? No, this is a whole new business. Will we have to stay vigilant against the chauvinist, sexist conditioning, the little patterns that pass for maleness? Sure we will. Can we adopt the other models that society offers to us? Can we adopt the violent and domineering model of the past, or the alternate models that are offered by the Gay movement, as sufficient for us? No. We can learn things from the Gay men's movement. There are important contributions that we have already borrowed there and will; but we can't take that as our general model. Whenever we have borrowed an outside program without question in RC, our program and movement have gone mushy.

We want to talk to the mainstream of men. We can not ignore the men in the armed services. At the crucial moment, the decision as to whether the missiles will fly or not is likely to be made by a support group of sergeants that has been meeting quietly, and arranges to see that the general's jeep breaks down before he can get there and give the order.

If even one of us makes up his mind, claims his power, and moves, that one is enough to guarantee the peace of the world. In general it is only the web of conditioning, of feeling that it can't be done that holds thousands and thousands of people back from effective action. What they're waiting for, what everybody's waiting for, is

continued. . .

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the one example, the theorem fleshed out, that proves that it can be done. We wait only because of the powerlessness and helplessness and fear and timidity that's been conditioned upon us. Where that breakthrough will come, I don't know, but certainly it will come. That this beautiful world should be wiped out because a few stupid patterns grind their way on unchallenged is an unthinkable alternative.

There are critical points in history, but they cannot be predicted. Many of you have heard me talk about one that caught my attention. Before the 1905 revolution in Russia, the repression was extremely heavy. Executions and pogroms and massacres took place, and the people cowered and cowered and cowered. Resentment grew, but nothing decisive happened, and the Czar and his satraps had every reason to think that they could continue to rule in their dictatorial way, because every desperate rebellion had been successfully put down in blood.

On the battleship Potemkin, which was stationed in the Black Sea, conditions were very rough, as everywhere. There had been a lot of attempts at rebellion and a lot of cruel repression, but the lid was still on. Then one morning *one sailor* looked down at his mush and saw weevils in it again and could not abide it anymore. He picked up the mush and put it very firmly in an officer's face. Supporting him, the entire crew mutinied, took over the battleship and its radio room, and steamed up and down the shores of the Black Sea radioing a call for rebellion to everyone on land. The people responded and the 1905 revolution began. It wasn't finally successful, but it laid the foundation for a successful one in 1917 that made great gains until it was sold out by its leadership at a later date. One sailor picked up one bowl of mush.

What will be the critical point in our intriguing and tense situation? We don't know, but it will occur.

I think we RC men are at a turning point. Look at us! If you look around this group it's easy to see ourselves as a whole new powerful force that's being turned loose. Male RC is going to eventually unleash enormous forces, and it's just about the right time to start. We've grown, we've got our heads straight within the confines of the existing setup. It's time for us to branch out.

Questions?

A: Many of us have been oppressed in more than one way: being men or working class or Jewish or a combination of all of them. Do you have a sense that therefore we are all going to have to choose one liberation struggle to put our energy into?

Harvey: You'll be involved in all of them, of course. Every breath you draw is as a Wygelian-1, Wygelian-2, Wygelian-3, Wygelian-4.... You're not going to lose any interest in Jewish liberation because you've taken the handcuff off your right arm of male liberation. It's just another front on which you can turn yourself loose. The old feeling, of course, is that we can't possibly accomplish all this, we do have all those interests. The only thing that keeps us from enjoying this million-faceted personality of ours is just exactly patterns that tell us that we're little pipsqueaks and can only do one thing at a time. That's not our nature. Our real nature is to be interested in everything, enjoy everything, do everything, and get some rest once in a while too.

B: I'm trying to organize my union brothers, and it's very hard. I've made great gains, but I still hear the same "Stop!" inside my head. "You can't fight city hall. You can't beat a dead horse."

I'm the one who has to speak up. And it seems like I'm never joined. How far do I have to go? I've put my life on the line a million times, but things haven't changed significantly. My brothers seem to be real scared.

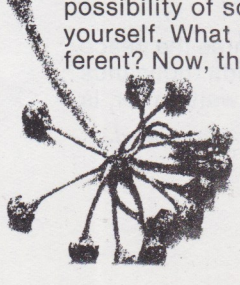
Harvey: You know anyone else that's real scared?

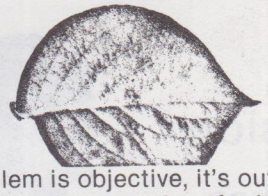
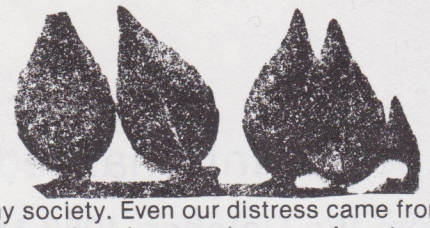
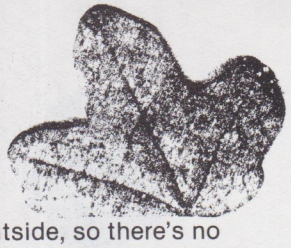
B: Yeah. Me.

Harvey: Thank you.

B: I need some support from these fellow members, and I got one supporter so far, after three years of hard work.

Harvey: What would you question, then? Something's wrong, right? Okay. Where would you first look for the possibility of something's being wrong? This is a good question for everybody. The first thing you question is yourself. What pattern am I acting out that might be in the way? What am I doing that I might possibly do different? Now, there's no use getting hung up on this, or you'll get into the pattern of blaming yourself. The basic



problem is objective, it's out there, the crummy society. Even our distress came from the outside, so there's no use blaming ourselves for it. But you do ask what's keeping people away. A cartoon I saw a long time ago portrayed one kind of possibility.

A woman is sitting on an analyst's couch. He's sitting supposedly out of her sight, but she rears up, cranes her head around at him, and says: "I said for some strange reason no one seems to like me. Why don't you wash out your ears, you fathead!"

I'm not saying this is you, but if what you're doing isn't working, ask yourself what else you might be doing.

Would you try saying to me in this confident tone of voice, B, "There's no question but that we're going to win."

B: "There's no question but that we're going to win." That's what I believe in.

Harvey: Is it possible for you to sound unanxious?

B: "There's no question but that we're going to win."

Harvey: Everyone you know is anxious up to here, and if you come to them with a message that says in words, "We're-gonna-win-we're-gonna-win," but your tone says, "I've got a little anxiety for you," then, thank you, but they're not having any.

Until you stop anxiousing at them, you won't get a chance to know what's going on with them. When you're a pillar of reassurance, then you look at the objective factors.

C: Will you say a few things about the clothing people wear and their re-emergence?

Harvey: (If you really want to re-emerge you have to wear white coveralls.) Seriously, I think your clothing needs to say to you and others that you like yourself, that you deserve elegance in garments. This isn't a question of expense. Brooks Brothers suits are just one way of liking yourself. There are lots of different styles of clothes. The culture's changed. When I was young, there was one style of clothes: you wore a coat and a vest and a necktie. Now the culture's changed, and it's possible to dress in many different ways and be thoroughly acceptable in most jobs; but I think your clothes should always say that you care about yourself. If caring about yourself means well-pressed, fine. Your clothes should always be clean, unless you're right there in the sewer now. This goes into hygiene, too. If you haven't taken a bath, you're telegraphing to everyone that you don't think you're worth keeping clean. Use deodorants; sweat turns sour. Sweat itself doesn't smell bad, but it turns sour pretty quick. A little dusting of baking soda will do a great deal for you—just a little tiny bit. Brush your teeth with soda. Soda will kill the bacteria that mouthwashes only cover up.

I think your clothes should say that you're a fine person. I put on a suit and tie still, believe it or not, once in a while, for a particular talk or something. But I'm also at this lovely place where I don't have to please anybody else, so I travel in coveralls, and if I get asked to repair a plane's motor, I'm ready. The business of "I'm just any old creature. I can wear any old thing." is no good. Remember that what you wear has an effect on people. Do you remember in grade school how much better the day was when the teacher wore something pretty, perhaps a nice bright-colored scarf? It always motivated me to learn a little better.

F: Would you comment on the problems and pitfalls that are frequently encountered with men trying to make their own men's support groups?

Harvey: Many of the barriers are the ones that we are used to looking at—the homophobia, the feeling that men mustn't get close, that they must always bristle when they're with each other, the feeling that someone is going to get out of control and become violent.

I didn't realize I had this fear until I attended my first men's support group at a workshop and realized that for the first time in my life I didn't have to be continually on guard lest one of the guys explode any minute and start attacking somebody. Then I realized I had had that feeling in every group of men I had ever been with before. In any bar somebody's always trying to pick a fight, somebody's pride is always about to flame up. You have to be on continual guard. The direction is cooperation, but I think for experienced RCers that job has been pretty well done. New men that you're going to be reaching may need some reminders and models. My guess is that with this gang our principal obstacles are going to be timidity and the habit of hanging back. Our basic direction now is to *move* and see what happens.

Panel on Internalized Oppression

From the October, 1982 Men's Workshop

Harvey: M, what have you thoroughly enjoyed about being male?

M: I'm very active. I move a lot and I've grown to like that. I'm very sensitive. I'm a visual person. I love having a son. I love having a business, because I've never done it before and I don't know what I'm doing. Every day I just have to be on my feet and think constantly, and it terrifies me and yet I do it well.

H: What did you enjoy about growing up male?

M: Walking in the woods, seeing sunsets, playing on the beach. I played a lot of active military games.

H: Why were you glad that you were male and not female?

M: Boys were better. They were smarter. They were stronger. They could do more. Except it didn't feel like they were smarter. In the first and second grades all the smartest people around me were girls. I think the oppression got to them about the third grade, then the boys started to seem to be smarter.

H: Okay. C, what did you like about being male rather than female as you were growing up? What do you like about it now?

C: I try not to think about it very much. I would rather think just as human beings than as male and female.

H: Yes, but when you were growing up? What was great about being male?

C: I never gave it that much thought. It's just like I grew and it didn't mean male or female. But if I were to think of it, I had more freedom, and I could do more things. But that was basically it.

H: What do you like about being male now?

C: There's not much I like about being male. Being male you have to take a lot of blame.

H: We'll get to that. What do you like about it?

C: What do I like about it? I don't know.

H: What do you like about being a black male?

C: I try not to get into that either. One little thing? I have a wonderful body, and I love taking care of it. That's about all I can think of.

H: You're not trying very hard. What else?

C: I try not to play into that. Like being male or....

H: I'm asking you to revert. Reverse your thinking right now.

C: Powerful.

H: Yeah, what else?

C: Able to make quick decisions.

H: Uhuh, what else?

C: Woooo.

H: You're among other males. You can say it. Go ahead.

C: Being with other men is good. I enjoy that.

H: Yes, what else?

C: I just thought how powerful, how strong I was, and just the ability to do things without worrying about whether I need someone else to help me. I can just take charge and do things, without worrying about whether someone else is helping me or whether I have to do it by myself.

H: What's been great about being male?

F: I liked the fact that the expectations were basically shoved at me to do well. I could outrun anybody even though I was shorter. Also, I liked riding my bicycle. I liked the fact that I could walk outside and be anywhere and the sexist oppression wouldn't come at me. I like bad dirty jokes among guys....

H: What was hard about being male as you grew up?

M: Feeling horrible. Like I was supposed to be my own person and I knew I could do what I wanted to do, but it took me thirty years to just begin to get a sense of my own self. It was horrible. I felt everybody's expectations were on me.

H: What else?

M: Less than perfect about growing up male? It seemed hard. It was a struggle to be good at school, to meet all the expectations. Women terrified me for a long time.

H: They still do, right?

M: I never felt very powerful. I achieved, but it was like the very narrow scope of activity growing up. I achieved very well in that.

H: What was your scope?

M: School athletics. Period. Track. Languages.

H: Okay, that's a sample.

H: C, what's been less than perfect about being male?

C: First thought was that being male I wasn't allowed to do what I wanted to do or be what I wanted to be or to even think that I would want to be anything else.

H: Like having babies.

C: Yeah. That came later. When I was growing up, you had to adhere to a particular mode. You had to do certain things. This was your responsibility. You had to do this. And if you did not become that.... Now it's like I'm blamed because I'm male.

H: "All men are bigots. You must be a bigot."

C: Yeah, that's essentially what it is, except I know I'm not.

H: What else has been hard? Did you get any extra violence because you were a male?

C: Yeah, I got beat a lot 'cause I was male. I got beat a hell of a lot. I didn't want to go to school, so I got beat. I didn't like staying in the house, so I got beat. I didn't like sitting at the dinner table, so I got beat. Gee, I got beat for everything. The more I got beat, the more I went the opposite way, just more determined to do what I wanted to do, like if the only price that I had to pay was the beatings, then I would take the beatings. I made that decision at an early age, when I was six or seven.

H: Kept you busy ever since, didn't it? Aren't you glad you made that decision instead of succumbing to the pressure?

C: Yeah, I see today that I'm much further along for that, for making that type of decision, much farther along, because there's a lot of stuff that I don't have to do. If I would have submitted to whatever it was that I was being told to do, it would be just that much more stuff that I would have to get rid of now.

H: Okay, that's a little sample. What's been less than perfect about being male?

A: The isolation from other men. I always wanted to get close to other guys, but it never happened. I can see the same isolation on my father. He is a feeling person but he doesn't get close to people. I always wanted to get real close to him. I wanted to get close to other men, but it didn't happen until my teenage years when I got into some counter-culture kinds of things. I figured out how to get close and it was nice. Another thing that was hard was having to be tough. I never wanted to be that, but you had to when you were little.

H: Combat was forced up on you all the time?

A: Not all the time, but some. There was a lot of peer pressure in the neighborhood.

H: What can't you stand about other men?

A: Having them back off when I reach out. (A starts crying heavily.) Starting with my father. They kept doing it throughout my whole life. I just hate it. I spent the first six weeks of my life in an incubator, and it puts me right back there. I feel all alone and struggling quietly by myself just to live.

H: What else can't you stand about other men?

A: They all seem like they are self-assured and have a lot of information and power. They make me feel like I'm in the military, and I'm on the outside. I guess I get scared.

H: In RC?

A: Yeah.

H: Talk about it. What are RC men like?

A: It feels like a nobility. It feels like a bunch of men that have set their lives down, that have found exactly the people that know how to move their stuff and they're not interested in expanding out. I feel like an outsider.

H: What else can't you stand about other men?

A: Their brutality.

H: What else?

A: How stupid they are.

H: What else?

A: How hurt they are.

H: They're really jammed up, aren't they?

A: They sure are.

H: Okay, that's a start. C, what can't you stand about other men?

C: Woooo. Let's see. The first thought was that they're wonderful. The second thought is that they're wonderful.

H: When you wear out being careful?

C: Is it being careful? I don't know.

H: I don't know. I think you've been censoring your speech for a long time for a darn good reason. In the privacy of your chambers what is it that lays eggs under your skin about other men?

C: How insensitive they are.

H: What else?

C: How rigid their thinking process is, and how they fail to alter thinking, to change thinking. Historically, most people have bought American history. If I come up and tell them you know this didn't happen this way, they fade out, think this guy is like one of those. They won't accept the truth.

H: Unwillingness to re-arrange their prejudices.

C: Right. It's stuck. All humans are wonderful. That's a fact. Humans act out of hurt and distress. That doesn't alter the fact that they're basically wonderful people.

H: We don't want to question that at all, but what do you notice about how crummy they act?

C: How crummy they act? How selfish they can be sometimes.

H: What can't you stand about other men?

A: They're cool all the time. They're too goddam cool. They don't know how to loosen up. As men get older, they forget how to play. They're too cool, too tough. They don't hang together. It seems that women all have special girl friends, and they're cheery and bouncy around each other and are generally delighted with each other. I don't find that too much among men in the wide world. I look for it. I set it up for myself well, but it takes some looking, a lot.

H: Okay. None of you mentioned the boozing, the great alcohol consumption.

A: Oooo, I always thought it was pretty disgusting.

C: Well, I'm an alcoholic. It is disgusting.

H: How do you feel about seeing a long line of them killing themselves off?

C: It hurts tremendously. I was doing it for so many years. I'm thirty-four-years-old. I've been drinking thirty-one years. I was able to stop, but it's sad. We short-change ourselves to such a degree by falling into the bottle, drinking.

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A: It's sometimes hard to see, you know? How am I going to make any male friends with all this drinking going on? I used to do it. Not with super regularity, but when everybody else was. It just hurts to see it. You can see how the same cycle keeps spinning around.

H: Rushing right along. What do you like about other men?

M: I like their bodies, very beautiful bodies. I like their love when they're in touch with it.

H: What else?

M: I like the fact that a lot of men are allowed to be creative. It's really fantastic.

H: What else?

M: I like that men are a lot of times allowed to create things, build things, and think they can do it.

H: C, what do you like about other men?

C: I like how graceful men are and how powerful they are, and able to do things that need to be done. They'll go in and do it. And just on tenacity, go in and make a decision.

H: A, what do you like about other men?

A: I like the way men are encouraged to do things, like build our bodies well and be aggressive. It comes across in music and dance. It's great. I like being able to wrestle hard. I like climbing all over each other.

H: Still rushing this a little bit. All of you can answer this question. You can interrupt each other and answer it, but don't argue with me about the question or say you don't understand or anything like that. I just want you to hear the question I ask and answer that question. Why don't you tell us what you've enjoyed about being female.

A: Sleeping with men. Making love, it's great.

F: Being powerful.

C: Being a parent, having a family, being a mother.

M: To be able to take care of houses and take care of families. Constantly, day in, day out. The little things.

A: Being able to act helpless.

F: Being vulnerable and sensitive, keeping in touch with my humanness.

C: Having a vagina, and not getting hit in the balls.

M: Cooking.

A: Playing sensitive music, as softly as I possibly can.

F: Crying, readily and easily.

C: Being made love to.

H: You have half the audience discharging. A neat way to get outside the oppression.

M: Wearing dresses.

F: Love talking about men.

C: Wearing a sexy bathing suit.

M: I love strutting my body.

H: Wearing a low-cut bodice and then objecting if anyone looks.

A: Batting my eyelashes.

F: Being able to be indecisive.

H: Some man will always make up your mind for you.

C: I like being able to cry anywhere and it being accepted.

M: Harvey, what's been great about being a man?

H: I'm glad you asked. You've probably noticed that all the things the brothers here didn't like or found hard about being male or that they couldn't stand in other men had nothing to do with being male. They were all results of the oppression, results of the conditioning, jamming into roles or expectations. What I like about being male is being one people. I am exactly that, all man. There's great advantages to it.

It's a wonderful experience to be female; I have no doubt about it. I agree, it's a wonderful experience. It must be; but it's not mine; and, wonder of wonders, the child who's had nine months to become acquainted with and attached to the mother and loves her dearly and derives all kinds of nurture from her, also with a deep intuition turns to me, the father, and is more than eager to weld deep, permanent bonds of affection with me, just like she'd known me all the time, too. I don't lose a thing from it. I can be every bit as much a parent as the mother can, in spite of what the culture tells you. I can be absolutely close and have a life-long, ever-deepening relationship with not only my children but any other children that I have a chance to be with.

Every young person in the world is looking for a man who will be real with them and close to them. I have tremendous affection waiting for me from any child that I will treat decently. A treasure of affection. I don't have to consult anyone. I am in charge of this universe. No one's going to argue with me successfully, when I know what I'm doing, and I can ask for information and opinions from everybody in the world, sift it through carefully and make up my own mind and act. I don't have to put any limits on my goals. I don't have to agree to die. I can decide to live forever, and give it my best try, and if by any chance I don't make it, it will simply be an accident.

There are no limitations which I have to accept. The future, my future, the future of the world, the future of the universe is in my hands, to the extent I choose to make it so. No one can tell me what to do. They can give me their opinion and in a certain situation, if they have a gun at my throat, I may nod, wring my hands, say yes, sir, eat garbage if ordered to (but only until I can get the jump on him), but I never need to agree to submit inside my own head, ever, no matter how bad the oppressive society is. I can keep my own power of decision intact, no matter what appearance of conformity I have to go through. I am sure that a woman would find it equally satisfactory. I don't think there's any difference, really, but I am a man, and I am just what I am, and that's exactly right, and I congratulate all you brothers in being in roughly the same situation.

QUESTIONS

Q: Do you imply that there's no difference, when one group of people is beating another with a stick that it doesn't make any difference which end of the stick you're on?

H: It is true that both groups suffer from the phenomenon, both groups are messed up by the patterns and so on, but there's a big difference which end of the stick you're on in an oppression. I think there is a fundamental incorrectness in the implication that target and non-target groups are alike, or that they're equal sufferers from the phenomenon.

Q: Do you foresee changes in the teaching of fundamentals classes that will benefit men? Specifically, do we need to address: (1) the initial strangeness of the discharge process, including certain common styles of discharge found in our Community, (2) feelings of competition to achieve discharge right away, both as client and counselor, to give good performances, (3) what makes it hard for men to validate each other? Do we want to give special emphasis to building strong relationships between men? That is, more life-sharing activities and de-emphasize discharge and directing attention repeatedly toward distress, trusting that discharge will naturally occur as improved and deepened relationships result in greater safety?

H: I think that last is very good. Anxiously prodding for discharge has never been helpful. To pay loving, respectful attention is still the most powerful single tool we have. Up until fairly recently there was a phenomenon that when I would visit Communities, the one uncrackable client that no one could get to discharge would be saved and dragged out and thrust at me for a demonstration, often with a few preliminary speeches that we've tried everything, I did this, I did this, I did this, I did this, nothing works, and he's standing there with nothing working. Almost always this is solved by respectful, warm listening for about three or four minutes, interested questions: what do you do for a living, how's your job—actually showing some interest instead of sitting there like a painted Easter egg waiting for Easter. As soon as the safety and interest is felt, the person starts heavy discharge. That's about what it is. We simply need to be very human and expect discharge when it's ready and basically be interested in the person and listen. It does almost everything. If you want to go beyond that, see the article in **The Reclaiming of Power**, *"The Counselor as Bagpiper." I think it's a good summary of the general atmosphere that you want to create. If you want to go further than that, you get specific and play your chanter on the particular contradiction. I assume that you remember to be interested and attentive and pay attention, be warm and expectant and delighted.*

On the first part of the question, the major change that I think needs to be made in our fundamentals classes is in the attitude toward men. I've been talking to women leaders. They will from now on eliminate the low expectations from their attitudes toward men. Jeff Evans in a recent **Present Time** *article says: "Understandably, but incorrectly, the women's movement has frequently viewed men as the enemy. This has set up a reactive pattern among many men not involved in the feminist movement. The attacks from women have made them retrench themselves with and give active support to sexist attitudes. Feminist leaders, particularly in RC but also in the wide world, have realized this was an incorrect policy and have denounced it along with some other incorrect policies. It seems to me that when someone starts exhorting this attitude that men are the enemy, men are perfectly correct in saying, 'This is not so.' When this attitude is thrown in our direction we can be sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that we don't deserve it. None of what I said previously in any way can take from us the responsibility of discharging our sexism. We don't in turn get to use this as an excuse to throw sexist distress at women. It's merely an attempt at stating: (a) what has happened with many men in the face of attacks by women, and (b) a correct policy for male allies with respect to this particular attitude, which we run into with regularity in the wide world."*

Then there's a letter from LeRoy Crittenden. He tells about twelve years in RC, what he's done, how it's changed his life, how it's influenced his family, and the good things they've done in the wide world, and he said: "It has taken a long time to get free of my entanglement with the Community. I think that the reason it has taken so long is that I have bought into the apparent view of the women leaders that I am fatally flawed (because of being male). I would get shut down and was not able to use my most powerful tool, my mind. My way out has been through men's work and Charlie Kreiner's workshops. The last three years we have had a men's group here. It is now a powerful group, and I have been appointed to lead it. At a recent introductory lecture, there were eleven new men and two women. That's a real change here. Another achievement I'm very proud of was a relationship counseling session with one of the woman leaders last week, no third person, we did so well. How have I done it? (1) No matter what else was going bad for me, I never stopped counseling at least once per week for ten years. (2) I knew that RC theory was sound. I had used it before I had heard of RC. (3) At some point I understood the importance of loving the RC leadership even if it was treating me incorrectly as a man."

Then there are some women speaking up. Mary Hodgson: "This men thing is important. It's one of the major things slowing us down. Women are caught deep down in believing that men are like what they appear. It's all over in the women's movement in RC that men are inferior and hopeless. Clarity came last week: the more I know that I love you, the more daring I'm being with men. The more I look, the more I see, and suddenly

continued. . .

continued. . .

I realized how well men are doing and what tiny holes men have through which to look out with a little humanness, and it's all locked in before they are two or three years old. And as all this came barreling in, I realized that there are two entirely separate viewpoints on women's liberation. One is the thought that yes, it's been limiting, lousy, and so on, and men have been the agents of that situation. The other viewpoint is that it is all past. Every present moment need not repeat that, because each woman is a full human being now, without needing to be rescued in her liberation by a man. The one point is from the view of the woman as a client, the other of the woman as a completely in-charge person now. Remnants of the old white knight patterns are clinging to our attitudes about the role of men in women's liberation. The view of men from the spot as client must be differentiated from reality about men. They are not the same thing. Men are doing well and deserve the love, respect, and challenge that every female client, friend, partner deserves. All the joking and dramatizing about men must stop now."

There's another one from Carol Warner in Tasmania: "We had a super Area meeting last week, where after reading **Present Time** *I saw something clearly. I promised, in front of the whole Area (she's the ARP there), that as a woman I would keep my material to do with sexism for the women's group, and if I let slip some material inadvertently, I would let my male counselor know of my love and appreciation for him as a good man, and any further work would have to have his permission. At that point, I said it would be good to get a men's group going, and so I said how about trying it now. It was terrific. We all got back together again and reported with sparkling eyes.*

"We need to eliminate the chinzy attitude toward men. Women are ready to do it. There's great awareness that something is wrong. I think the awareness we have of this now will take care of most of it."

Q: What makes it hard for men to validate each other?

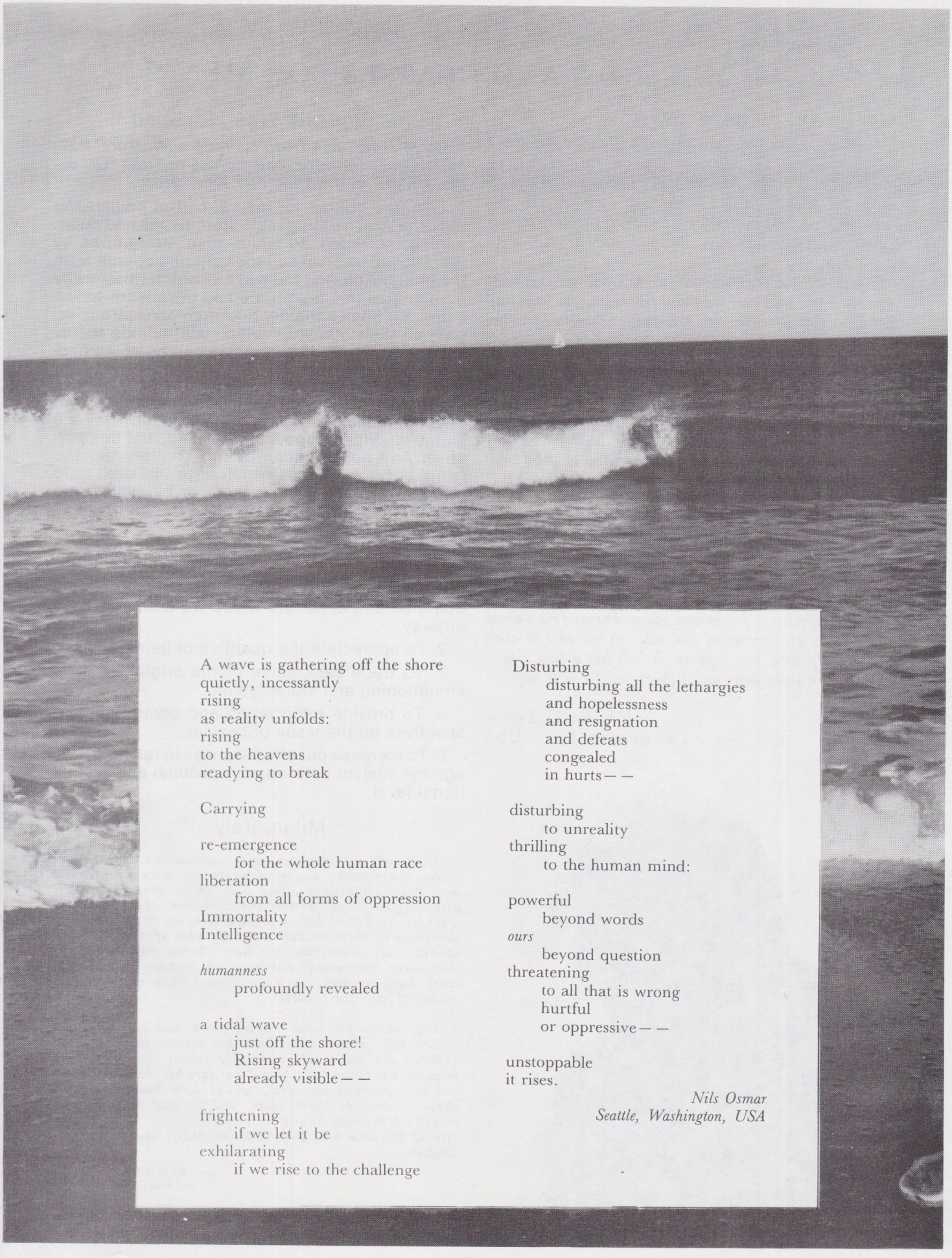
H: They were never validated. Funny thing about that. I still find it difficult. There's still a feeling in there that men shouldn't have to have it. It's ridiculous, but the thing still pulls. I think other men leaders, in general, feel this. The women get all kinds of support from me and the men have to practically stand around and ring bells before I'll say, "Oh yeah, you're doing fine." This is not unique to me.

Q: Would you take a few minutes to say how good workers are or do a brief framework for workers, or point out the benign reality as it applies to workers?

H: Working-class people? Let me put us up-to-date first. In most of the work of the world, at least in advanced countries, most of the work force is no longer in production. Manufacturing, for example, takes about 30% of the workers, while the processing of information takes over half of the workers. Things have shifted. Information is the most precious commodity of this time because of the enormous extension of productivity by the machines and by the information control process itself. We're not living in the world of our fathers. Even the economists still are biased in this direction. Information processing has become a basic industry. But whether we swing a sledge or punch a keyboard, work is the center of our humanness. No one functions well without work. Some of the cruellest things done by oppressions are denying people access to work.

It's true that the enjoyment of the environment, or the awareness of it, is important. It's true that the creativity in abstract ideas is among the highest level activities of humans, but basically our excellent survival, the fact that there are four and half billion wonderful humans, with the enormous intelligence that's operating, largely covered by distress but ready to be liberated from the distress, is the result of our work. Work is the handling of the environment for human survival. We can broaden that definition to the survival of all forms of life. We'd better pretty soon. Work very much is the center of our activities. To realize how important it is and how much the center of our existence, consider our surroundings. We think all these chairs are hard, but we've got a place to sit, we've got a place to stay warm, we've got warm clothing, we have elegant communication, we've got advanced equipment here making videocassettes. We have access to information from a dozen sources. We have created a wonderful environment. There are a few snags in it, the pollution, the misuse and so on, but they are tiny compared to the results of our work. People who work produce everything. Everyone lives on the production of the people who work, and workers in the basic industries of course produce almost all of it.

How good workers are? Well, they're human, and as Shakespeare says, "Who can say more than this rich praise: that you alone are you?" A worker is who he is or she is. They're just marvelous, like all humans. They do produce the wealth on which everyone lives, and their relationship to production organizes them and prepares them to play a key role in the transformation of society. Beyond that I wouldn't glorify them or claim that their armpits don't get stale just like anybody else's if they don't wash once in a while. They're no more virtuous than anyone else. It's just that their class position in relation to production makes them a crucial factor.



A wave is gathering off the shore
quietly, incessantly
rising
as reality unfolds:
rising
to the heavens
readying to break

Carrying

re-emergence
    for the whole human race
liberation
    from all forms of oppression
Immortality
Intelligence

humanness
    profoundly revealed

a tidal wave
    just off the shore!
    Rising skyward
    already visible— —

frightening
    if we let it be
exhilarating
    if we rise to the challenge

Disturbing
    disturbing all the lethargies
    and hopelessness
    and resignation
    and defeats
    congealed
    in hurts— —

disturbing
    to unreality
thrilling
    to the human mind:

powerful
    beyond words
ours
    beyond question
threatening
    to all that is wrong
    hurtful
    or oppressive— —

unstoppable
it rises.

Nils Osmar
Seattle, Washington, USA

photo by Harvey Jackins

WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES FOR MEN

Iowa, U.S.A.

I am writing to you in the aftermath of a workshop that I helped organize in Des Moines as a part of my activities in a group called "The Des Moines Men's Collective." We sponsored, and another man and I organized, a workshop for men concerning men and violence. We had thirty people in attendance for one and a half days.

The most affirming part of the workshop for me was hearing people say what had gone well for them at the workshop and what their next step was following the workshop to put an end to violence in our society. People almost unanimously shared how much energy they had been able to draw from the group, how affirmed they felt to be in a group composed mostly of men who shared affection, warmth, and openness, and how valuable the experiences had been. Also, four people said that they had already contacted people with whom they worked to set up in-service training programs to share what had been done during the weekend.

As I have spent more and more energy in my life confronting sexist oppression and actively working to end sexist oppression, I have become aware of the importance for myself of directing my energy into relationships with men and into activities geared towards and for men that will achieve my goal of ending oppression. I have now gathered around me a group of men who are committed and who all are able to share warmth, affection, and support. It feels like a long way to have come in seven years and I thank you for your help.

HARVEY HARRISON
DES MOINES, IOWA, USA

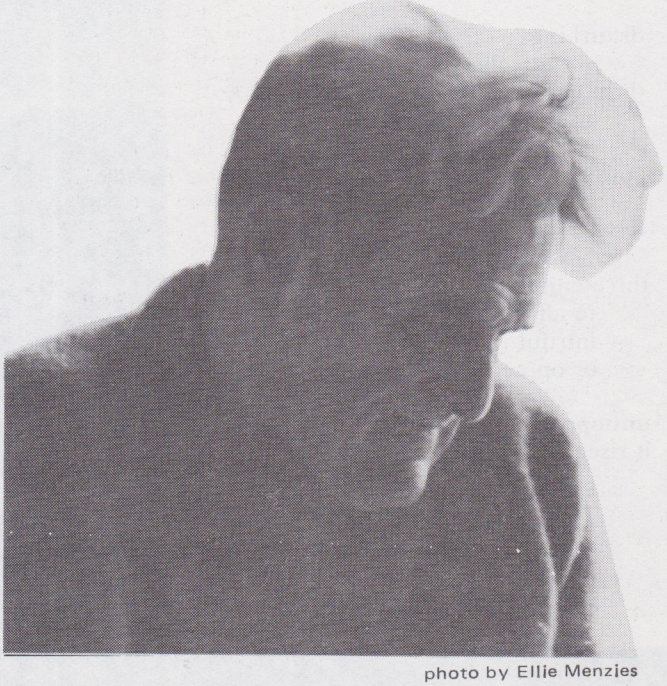


photo by Ellie Menzies

Tyne and Wear, England

Doug Miller has been running a Workers' Education Association evening class entitled "On Being A Man" in the Tyne and Wear area.

This is a course for men aimed at uncovering the origins of existing male stereotypes and determining the extent to which men are harmed by them. It will be an experience-sharing course, with the group exploring the ways in which various key human qualities are stunted as boys learn to "be men." We shall consider how men can learn to regain all their humanity which will include focussing on "sexism" and how this can be unlearned.

Course Outline:

The assumption underlying this course is that men are human beings in every respect. They are highly intelligent, good, caring, kind, and co-operative. Any appearances to the contrary are the results of experiences which have installed rigid patterns of behaviour in them or by systematic conditioning which society places upon them.

Working on the basis of this assumption, the aims of the course are fivefold:

1. To rediscover and reclaim these human qualities and celebrate those we know we have anyway.

2. To appreciate the qualities of being male.

3. To trace back some of the origins of male conditioning and stereotyping.

4. To provide information and some new perspectives on the issue of sexism.

5. To increase our effectiveness in taking action against sexism both on an individual and institutional level.

Milan, Italy

Most of my students are businessmen, technicians, research assistants, electrical engineers, accountants, etc., and I'm beginning -- along with challenging their sexist assumptions -- to notice the isolation that goes with working hard five days a week and being tired when they get home to their families. I can see a lot of resignation and sadness, like something has been stolen from them, like they were "promised" the good life and now just have to work hard to make ends meet, and they obviously feel excluded from the family.

I spent half-an-hour talking with and listening to a father talk about how hard his relationships with his children are now. He obviously felt it was all too late now, so I reassured him that I was sure his children, though sad and perhaps resentful, would love him to start to show interest in them again, and he said he'd try, and would tell me how he got on.
(David Simpson now lives in Milan, Italy, where he teaches English.)

reprinted from Southern England RC Men's Newsletter No. 8

Non-RC Men's Group

After I had been counselling for about six months, it was becoming clear to me that I didn't have many men friends here in Bath. So I decided to make some.

The best way I could think of to do this was to start a non-counselling men's group. The idea was exciting and also scary, as I had never before been in any sort of close group with men outside counselling, let alone start one. I wasn't put off, though—it felt like absolutely the right thing to do.

I put up a couple of notices in a community bookshop and a wholefood shop, saying the sort of group I wanted to start.

It worked perfectly, and within a month myself and three other men were having our first meeting.

It is now six months later, and I have become close friends with one of the men. In fact, we are now planning to buy a house together! And that's not all. There have been lots of great spin-offs from that original action of mine.

One was when a lorry driver passing through Bath saw a notice (which I hadn't, and still haven't, taken down) and wanted to find out more about what was happening. I was able to tell him that the group had started and how well it was going. He was a lovely man, and we had a good chat over a cup of tea. When he was going, we held hands and he said I was welcome to go and stay with him if ever I wanted. It was great.

Jim Gillespie
reprinted from Southern England RC
Men's Newsletter No. 8

MEN TAKING POWER

You'll be proud of me. I must admit, I'm proud of myself. Recently, Lia and I went to our synagogue to attend a meeting on Israel. There was no particular focus—it was just after the Lebanon war and my Rabbi's outspoken critical comments against the Israeli government at Yom Kippur.

I was the star of the meeting. I said some good things—I spoke about how the whole issue was easy to understand if one realised that two nationalisms were fighting over one territory; one needs to stay clear on that and not get lost in the bickering over details. I spoke about how in the Diaspora we should have a commitment to Israel, but that a Diaspora existence is as important and valuable as an Israeli existence, and I spoke about Jewish isolation and how we need to unite ourselves with the oppressed, and not seek the protection of the strong. Obviously I still need to sort that out for myself, but the rest of it came straight out of ME (not from Re-evaluation Counselling or RUAH HADASHAH, etc.) and was an inspiration.

I've been asked to give a paper, which I said I would consider after the summer (when I've done some teaching and had time for preparation). Not bad, eh. And the coup de grace: I asked the chairman of the Israeli Committee about inviting a Palestinian speaker. He and a couple of others, including the Rabbi, thought it was a good idea.

Tim Kahn
reprinted from Southern England RC
Men's Newsletter No. 8

LETTERS TO EDITORS

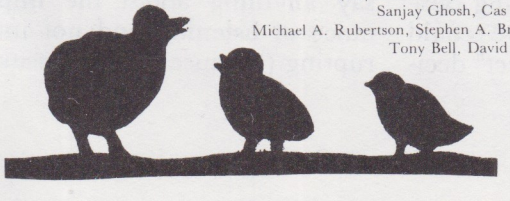
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

To the Editor:

We have noticed a practice of the *Post Dispatch* that you ought to change. On page 3 of the Friday (11/18) paper, you label the pictures of the three individual men by only their last names. The two pictures of women are identified with "Mrs." in addition to their last names. The City Editor's desk confirmed by phone that this practice is the standard policy of your paper.

We are concerned about this policy of identifying women by their relation to men. This is not information relevant to the news stories. It only serves to reinforce the oppressive thinking that women are only of value according to their relation to men. We urge you to stop this unaware and unprofessional practice of identifying women as married or not. Please respond.

Kevin Chestnut
St. Louis, Missouri, USA
(Ray Eberle-Mayse, Dick Wagner, Sanjay Ghosh, Cas Koziatek, Michael A. Rubertson, Stephen A. Brammeier, Tony Bell, David R. Bates)



REDBOOK

Editor:

I was dismayed with the title by which you chose to designate Beverly Stephen's article in the May, 1982 issue of *Redbook* ("*Fathers* Who Are Good At *Mothering*"). Not only does it do a disservice to Ms. Stephen's article, but it perpetuates a great injustice to the wonderful men about whom the article was written, as well as those other men who are working toward recapturing the inherent sense of warmth, tenderness, and nurturance with which all males are born.

By implying that a man's caring for or spending quality time with his children is "mothering," the title seems to indicate that those acts are the inherent domain of women and mothers. Nothing could be further from the truth or more harmful to men's striving toward consistent performance of those acts.

Many men may hesitate at entering into roles that have traditionally been the preserve of women because they fear that doing so makes them less "masculine." The article's title conveys a clear message to men that to be nurturing is to be "feminine" and could serve to discourage the very men whom you intend to laud.

As the father of a two-year-old boy whom I love dearly and with whom I spend many close, warm, and nurturing hours, I was deeply offended by the article's title. My only hope is that, by speaking out through this forum, other men will realize that our struggle is not only against the values handed down to us, but against foolish notions like the one your magazine has perpetuated.

Brad Plebani
Willimantic, Connecticut, USA

LEADING A MEN'S GROUP

I am a teacher working for ILEA (Inner London Education Authority). Over the past year, I have seen a growing awareness within the Authority of sexism. The issues of sexism in schools, its effect on society and devising programmes and strategies to change things are beginning to be seen as important by the Authority. Of course, many individual teachers have noted the issues and have been doing the work for several years, but it is heartening to see our employer now beginning to give us official backing.

As a consequence of all this, a number of "official" (i.e., organised by ILEA, CIES, Schools Council, Teachers Circle) courses and conferences are now being provided for teachers. I went to one such conference—"Challenging Sexism in the Primary School"—at the nearby teachers' centre a few months ago.

The conference started with "personal awareness" sessions. All the men, about twelve of us, went into one group, and the women, about thirty, were split into two other groups. I found the men's group frustrating to be in. The man leading it (I think he was a therapist) was tense and was trying to take us through a "formula" of questions which he'd been given by the women organising the conference and which had worked well in a women's group. I found it frustrating because I couldn't help comparing what was going on with RC men's groups. At the same time it was exciting to see all these men (including two headmasters) who'd never been near such a group before and who also had mixed feelings about being there. I realised that men's groups needn't only be for "alternative" men. People were nervous and stiff, and I could see that, with more relaxed and more flexible leadership, such a group could build up safety.

I spoke to the organisers about the group afterwards. Looking back, I think what happened was they picked up my excitement about it, and they asked me if I would be interested in leading future men's groups at similar conferences being held around London.

I led my first such group a few days ago and learnt a lot.

I found it hard to think about what I wanted to do, basically because I knew that the people in it weren't coming together with already shared assumptions that it was okay to share how they felt and where they were vulnerable. I talked it over with a friend and, although I was scared going down on the train to Eltham, at the same time I was fairly clear about what I planned to do. I think I was mostly scared about encountering the same kind of hostility that I'd seen some of the men express in the previous group I'd been in.

There were only four men (including myself) in the men's group this time, compared to about twenty-five women in the other group, but I was quite glad in a way—it made it seem less threatening to everyone. I started off, after we'd introduced ourselves, by talking about why I thought such a group was a valuable part of a "Challenging Sexism" conference; how we could make intellectually "correct" decisions about how we were going to tackle sex-stereotyping in our classroom, but at the same time we'd had many years to build up our feelings and attitudes about men and women, and it wasn't so easy to change our gut feelings and reactions overnight. It was important that we took the time to talk about them.

I also talked about what it often felt like for men to come to a conference with the word "sexism" in the title. How we could easily start to feel that we were the "problem," the "ones who'd been naughty." But, despite what might be said or how we felt, that wasn't so. We were just fine as men, and always had been. We'd been conditioned in such a way which was sometimes hurtful to women and also to ourselves, but it wasn't our fault. We'd been given a lot of misinformation, but our inherent goodness was not in question. We had the same innate good qualities that women did.

I was more scared than I can remember being for a long time, saying these things to a group of unknown men, but everyone seemed quite happy and there were nods around the group as I talked.

The rest of the time (we had been allocated an hour) was a kind of informal discussion/conversation. I had various questions I'd thought of (and other ones which occurred to me as we went along), which I'd "feed in" to the group, and I tried to make sure that everyone was included and had their time to speak. I forgot to say anything about the importance of listening and not interrupting (because of being scared,

I'm sure), but there was very little interrupting, I think because of the example I set.

Something else which was important was my readiness to share how I felt when I spoke, and especially to talk about the times I felt unsure of myself. Much more effective than me talking about sharing feelings, my doing it encouraged everyone else to follow suit.

The hardest time for the group was near the beginning when I asked what people thought was good about being a man. It seemed like everything that was said came under the heading of "the benefits of being a man as opposed to being a woman" (e.g., the greater ease with which a man could get a promotion or a mortgage, being able to walk alone at night, etc.) and was said somewhat apologetically. But I figured it was a start anyway and let it continue. It was interesting when I asked the group what they liked about women—everyone thought of lots of things they liked, and they were all the real, human things. It showed up how bad men feel about themselves, whether they realise it or not, and how we see woman as having all the qualities we feel we lack.

Towards the end, I asked for people's "little victories" in dealing with sex-stereotyping (I only used the word "sexism" once during the whole hour), and after a hesitant start everyone caught on, got quite excited and also laughed quite a lot. I could see everyone becoming aware of their "okayness," and I've decided to ask that question much earlier next time.

The group went on way over time. Nobody wanted to stop. Eventually, I had to break it up because I had to rush off to catch my train.

I'm looking forward to leading more such groups for teachers. In the meantime, I'm helping to organise a day conference for London teachers called "Equal Opportunities—what's in it for boys?" This is the first such conference looking specifically at the effects of sexism on boys. I hope it's going to be the first of many!

Peter Kahn
reprinted from Southern England RC Men's Newsletter No. 8

photo by Carol Hennessy

Class Issues in the Men's Movement

By Harry Brod, a former active RCer, now a leader in the National Men's Movement. This is a condensed version of an article that appeared in M.: Gentle Men for Gender Justice, #11 Winter 1983-84.

The dominant self-understanding of the men's movement about the reasons for its class composition and the impact of that composition on its goals and position in the larger society can be summarized in the following distinct but related ideas:

1. Middle-class men predominate in the movement because their greater access to financial resources, leisure time, and education gives them greater opportunities to entertain new ideas and break out of traditional roles. But the ideas and values of the movement – cooperation instead of competition, nurturing of self and others instead of exploitation of women's nurturing, expression rather than denial of positive emotions, sensitive, egalitarian relationships instead of aggressive domination, etc. are in principle equally applicable and available to all men simply as men.

2. We, in the men's movement, are a minority vanguard whose consciousness is in fundamental opposition to and in advance of the society around us. We are engaged in the task of giving up our male privileges and freeing ourselves from an oppressive system.

3. The reasons for seeking to broaden the class composition of the movement are essentially altruistic and moral. Middle-class men must compensate for their greater privilege, and a movement whose values are as universal as ours should be representative of the population as a whole.

4. The basic issue in improving our outreach techniques is finding ways to bring the ideas current to the movement to other men. Probably the chief vehicle for this is individual consciousness-raising.

I believe that all of the above – the explanation of the predominance of middle-class men in terms of enlightened consumerism in the marketplace of ideas, the image of ourselves as a vanguard divesting itself of power, the moralistic basis of our outreach work, and the idealist emphasis on individual consciousness-raising in that work are wrong.

ROOTS OF IDEOLOGY

To begin to understand why this outlook is wrong, we need to dispel the myth that the ideology of the men's movement arises apart from or outside the economic class system. What the movement likes to think of as a counter-culture is really a sub-culture which fits into a certain niche in U.S. society. Rather than arising in fundamental opposition to the system, the men's movement has developed from changes taking place within that system. Despite some rhetoric to the contrary, this has always been true of radical movements and ideologies. For example, the slogan "the personal is political" was not created out of thin air. It was a response to the pattern of twentieth century industrialization in which more and more of everyone's personal life is directly dominated by economic and political forces beyond their personal control. Were the movement not grounded in the internal dynamics of the system itself, it would not have the potential it does have. To understand this, we need to examine the relevant structural changes in the U.S. economy.

The economic system of the U.S. in the late twentieth century has shifted from manufacturing (e.g., steel, plastics, etc.) to service (e.g., information processing, public services, etc.) with a corollary transition from a work to a consumer ethic. These changes have especially affected the work and lifestyles of the middle classes. The values espoused by the "new male" – cooperation, self-expression, sensitivity, etc. – fit smoothly into this new economic reality. In the first place, the office or service worker, in contrast to the factory worker, must be more congenial, thoughtful, and presentable in appearance, because these jobs have a public relationship component.

Equally important, the shift to a consumer ethic has meant that the performance principle of the older work ethic, which required men to repress their need for gratification in order to channel their energy and resources into productive labor, has been replaced by an ethic of self-gratification through leisure pursuits outside of work. This loosens some of the restrictions and rigidities of traditional masculinity.

Workers now define themselves less through their work itself, and more in terms of the consumer goods their wages purchase. Workers who once would have identified with their work and defined themselves as working class (i.e., those who work for a wage and do not control their working conditions) now identify with their standard of living (as defined by the purchasing power of their wages), and define themselves as middle class. Given this consumerism and lack of class consciousness of American society, it is only natural that men's movement rhetoric be filled with talk of "lifestyles" we choose to lead outside of work. The men's movement must recognize that this new consciousness results from large-scale structural changes in economic life, not from the inspired enlightenments of a few individuals.

Over-emphasis on individual consciousness-raising promotes inattention to the social basis of change. This makes it more difficult to change the institutions which give rise to the values we want to be fighting, and it prevents large numbers of men from joining the movement. Our strategies must be aimed not simply at individual ideological transformation, but at producing the concrete material transformations which can alone sustain this ideological growth. We must take this new consciousness back into the workplaces which produced it, and extend it into those which did not.

CRITIQUE OF STYLE

There are serious dangers in conceptualizing the movement as revolving around issues of "lifestyles." "Styles" inevitably pass. This is the primary mechanism of cooptation. In the early 60's, for example, in revolt against artificiality and hypocrisy, some women rejected makeup, elaborate hair styling, constricting clothing, etc. in order to remain true to their natural selves. But when "looking natural" became "The Natural Look" complete with appropriate cosmetics, hair styles, and clothing now sanctioned by the fashion industry, the way was paved for this "New Look" to pass in a few years with a return to traditional fashions. Our economy is built on such periodic changes in style. Similarly, if men's new sensibilities are seen simply as part of the packaging of the "New American Man," it practically guarantees that we shall see a return to traditional styles of masculinity in a few years. For this reason, the frequency of media appearance by movement superstars is not a reliable measure of success of the movement.

The ambiguity of some current lifestyle changes is reflected in the growing industry in male cosmetics and jewelry. On the one hand, this represents a move away from thinking of the male body solely as a productive machine and toward an aesthetic sense of self, which is all to the good. On the other hand, however, under current market conditions it also represents an extension of commercial sexual exploitation and objectification from the female to the male body.

A LIMITED CLASS PERSPECTIVE

The only way to prevent the men's movement from passing as just another fad, or remaining a retreat for a privileged minority, is to sink much deeper roots into the daily context of the majority of men's lives, and that means, above all, the workplace. The middle-class men who make up the majority of the movement must move in two related directions: bridging the gap between work and leisure in order to more thoroughly ground the movement in material life, and bringing men's liberation into workplaces at all levels of society, and not solely in their own strata. The movement can then reach the majority needed to bring about lasting social change.

Unfortunately, even when the movement addresses issues of work, it usually does so from a limited class perspective, focusing on the alienation of the corporate executive. Rather than suggesting activist involvement in one's workplace, psychological withdrawal from work is often advised, thus widening rather than closing the work/leisure dichotomy. While it is true that the reduction of one's sense of self to one's status as a worker is psychologically damaging and has been a part of the traditional masculinity, which the movement is and should be challenging, it is also true that to counsel withdrawal from identification with one's work is equally damaging.

While the moralistic strategy of "dropping out of the system" produces feelings of virtue on the part of the downwardly mobile, it is, in reality, a misguided strategy of the privileged. Its principal effects are increased competition for lower-level jobs leaving the social structure unchanged. This strategy denies the movement access to positions of power and alienates men who come from working-class backgrounds.

We need to be clear that there is no such thing as giving up one's privileges to be "outside" the system. One is always in the system. The only question is whether one is part of the system in a way which challenges or strengthens the status quo. Privilege is not something I take and which I therefore have the option of not taking. It is something that society gives me, and unless I change the institutions which give it, I will continue to have it, however noble and egalitarian my intentions.

For example, counter-culture men who consider themselves ex-middle or upper class cannot divest themselves of the reserve security they gain from having the option of falling back on old family ties and funds, as well as skills learned in earlier times, an option not available to those whose poverty is forced and not voluntary. And my relative safety in walking the streets, the added authority the timbre of my voice gives what I say, my peace of mind in knowing that however dismal the economy or my personal finances become I will have an advantage in seeking a job, are all aspects of male privilege embedded in social structures, and not subject to my personal renunciation. While men who are pessimistic about the possibilities of social change often express pride in having at least surrendered their own privileges, this attitude reflects a fundamental misunderstanding. To give up male privilege is impossible, to overthrow it is not.

Middle-class men often respond to their class privilege with guilt and project this feeling onto others. For example, I attended one men's workshop in which participants were asked to identify themselves in part through their work. As the high percentage of academics became apparent, the academics began introducing themselves apologetically, with embarrassed attempts at self-effacing humor. Finally, one working-class man stated that he and, he thought, other working-class men were pleased with the success the other men had attained and expected them to use these positions in progressive ways. But their self-demeaning attitudes made him skeptical about whether they were using these positions to anyone's benefit, since they were having such difficulty standing up even for themselves.

This personalized guilt is simply the other side of the coin of the personal pride middle-class men often take in their enlightened feminist consciousness. The social, historical explanation of the origins of this consciousness presented earlier should help depersonalize these issues and remove both the unwarranted guilt and pride. Elimination of the former is necessary because it is immobilizing and prevents middle-class men from using their power effectively. Eliminating the latter is necessary because it hinders outreach to working-class men. When middle-class men try to communicate the ideas of the movement to working-class men, the assumption that one's "higher" consciousness is due to one's own ideas and sensitivities, rather than to the material conditions of one's life, feeds an intellectual elitism which, however subtle it may be in the consciousness of those speaking, comes across loud and clear to the working-class men doing the listening.

WORKPLACE ISSUES

We need to focus more attention on workplace issues in a way which demonstrates their relation to anti-sexist consciousness. Occupational safety, for example, can become a central men's issue. Like the issue of sexual harassment for the women's movement, occupational safety may become one of the best examples of a class-based male anti-sexist politics, one where we can stress the connections between class and sex injustices. We face an ideology which says men are supposed to be tough and able to take harsh conditions. To complain is to show unacceptable weakness. A little danger even adds to the masculinity of the job. Here sexist ideology reinforces the mistreatment of male workers. This connection was vividly illustrated during the struggle for ERA ratification. Twelve of the fifteen states which failed to ratify also have strong anti-union, so-called "right to work" laws.

It is clearly in men's interest to humanize the workplace at all levels and make it a safer and more hospitable environment, whether the dangers be radioactivity, pollution, machine failure, or psychological stress. The movement should serve as a support network, finding better ways for men to deal with work-related health hazards than the traditional male responses leading to alcoholism, ulcers, tension headaches, heart problems, and, ultimately, early deaths.

Our movement needs to be aware of where this may already be happening, even when it may not fit our pre-conceived notions of what "liberated" men look like. One of the first major demon-

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strations the Reagan administration faced, for example, was by coal miners demonstrating for better health care and safety inspections in the mines. These demands go far toward breaking the traditional male mold. The men's movement should have been there.

In addition we know that much male violence, domestic and otherwise, is a recycling of abuse men receive at work but feel powerless to resist there. Aiding that resistance is essential to the crucial anti-violence aspect of our movement. A humanized workplace is the inescapable precondition for a more humane world.

IMAGERY, LANGUAGE, AND OPPRESION

Much of the imagery of the movement reflects class bias. When the drawbacks of the male role are lamented, the focus is usually on the hardships of men in middle- and owning-class positions. When the oppressive behaviors of sexism are criticized, however, the focus is usually on working-class stereotypes: hard-hat jeers, pin-ups on the shop floor, the violent jock, etc. This discrepancy perpetuates two myths: that working-class men are more sexist than other men, and that the refinements of "upper"-class life are a prerequisite for the "higher" consciousness of sexism. Yet many women, when the conversation moves past rhetoric to real feelings, admit that they sometimes prefer the direct sexism of traditional men. They know that it often comes coupled with direct support and action, rather than condescending, pseudo-tolerance they find in many middle-class men, which may not directly offend, but cannot be counted on for solid support.

Much of what the men's movement validates as liberated or scorns as traditional is simply a preference for middle-class over working-class style. This is manifest in areas like the "mellowspeak" adopted by many movement men. With the laudable intention of avoiding traditional masculine power plays, we have on occasion instituted a new form of power—those who conform to middle-class styles are listened to and others not.

An example of falsely generalizing from a middle-class perspective is the pressure often exerted on all Gay men to come out publicly. While public identification has important political significance, for many working-class men who fear for their jobs, this is lifestyle luxury they cannot afford. And their family relationships are often at greater risk as well. Working-class family members are often too dependent on each other to envisage the aloof tolerance middle-class Gay men may at least hope for from their families, and they are too familiar with the experience of oppression to allow a family member to invite additional oppression when it seems to them it could be avoided.

Much that gets validated as non-aggressivity and sensitivity is really middle-class timidity and "niceness," cultural inhibitions against letting the rough edges of life show through. As one feminist put it in an interview, "The problem with a lot of men who adopt feminist values is they believe that in order to be decent and good they have to give up all force, all strength, and all assertiveness." Put simply, the men's movement needs to get tougher.

An overly-simplistic egalitarianism and middle-class guilt over privilege sometimes fuse to form a destructive anti-intellectualism and anti-leadership tone in the movement. This can result in the suppression of the abilities of analytic thinking, articulateness, leadership, and assertiveness which our sexist society has predominantly encouraged men to develop but which need not be oppressive when used to liberate all people including ourselves. We need to positively use these qualities which aren't inherently oppressive.

There are other falsely generalized men's movement issues relating to forms of oppression other than class. I experience the model of "gentility" I am writing about as anti-Semitism, because I identify with my Jewish heritage those parts of me I have to repress in order to "pass" in the WASP ethos of the movement. To give another example, emphasis on men touching and hugging each other is correctly seen as an important issue in an Anglo-Saxon context, where there are such strong taboos against it. But for many Third World men, whose cultures do not carry these inhibitions, continual emphasis on the politics of hugging leaves them baffled and alienated.

UNITING DIVERSE TRADITIONS

To emphasize this working-class perspective is not to romanticize the working class or to claim that oppression makes the oppressed more virtuous. It doesn't. Oppression damages people's psyches, and there is much in typical working-class behavior which needs to be changed. But this can be criticized only while appreciating that there are also real examples of strength and brotherhood there which can serve as models for all men. This is true of men in the military, for example, as well as for factory workers.

There are valid reasons why so many men reserve a special affection for the camaraderie shared with their old "army buddies." The tragedy is that it takes the fear of death for the barriers between men to drop enough for these feelings to develop. Support for men forced into militaristic behavior, including support for veterans' programs, is a necessary part of a broad-based men's movement. We must identify and eliminate our attitudes which prevent veterans from identifying themselves at men's movement events. There is no contradiction between being anti-war and supporting men from the military.

Working-class experience also challenges the cherished middle-class illusion that simply behaving properly and desiring that others do the same satisfies the demands of morality. This belief is part of the apolitical "lifestyle" manner in which movement issues are conceptualized. But it is naive to think it sufficient that men support progressive legislation as a matter of personal conviction but not organize other men to demonstrate this support; or that men remain content with not being rapists without working to make the streets safer for women. Working-class traditions of solidarity and united action offer an alternative perspective.

SUMMARY

To summarize, I would like to recall the four ideas that I claimed at the beginning of this article characterized the ideology of the men's movement, and ask the reader to contrast them with the following theses, based on the analysis I have presented.

1. Middle-class men predominate in the movement because their socialization through their role in the economy brings them to oppose traditional concepts of masculinity. While at one level the values the movement espouses are universal, in practice its ideas and issues reflect the concerns and lifestyles of these men.

2. Men's movement consciousness grows directly out of the dynamics of our society. Since we are of necessity embedded in the system, we cannot give up our privileges, but we can work at overthrowing the system that grants them.

3. We must broaden our class composition for our own survival. To do this we must raise more work-related issues at all levels of society.

4. Successful outreach to working-class men necessitates changes in current practices which exclude or alienate them, and a greater focus on institutional, political change, without which consciousness-raising cannot sustain itself.

Harry Brod
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ATHLETICS (KURT'S KORNER)

I am pleased that more men have written down their own experiences with athletics. Some accentuate the positive, while others present more of the difficulties. Enjoy them, and here are a few more thoughts to consider while you are lacing up your sneakers:

Who are your sports heroes? One of mine was John Havlicek, the Boston Celtic basketball player, who always seemed to save his best performances for the biggest games. Like the time he played in the championship series against the New York Knicks with a very sore right shoulder (he was right-handed), and he scored sixteen points left-handed.

How many of you people have ever lifted weights? Does that last repetition, when you give it everything you've got, leave you quivering, like it does me? Powerlessness, HAH!

Could someone explain the popularity of boxing to me? Look at Muhammed Ali or Joe Frazier today and you see the effect of all those blows to the head, and yet a guy like Sugar Ray Leonard wants to climb back in the ring and do it all again. Why?

If you want to view an entertaining sports event, try going to a high school basketball tournament game. You will usually get a great crowd and inspired play under the heat of intense competition. Compared to the pros, I find it both more competitive and more sportsmanlike.

I must have seen the movie ten times already, but the last twenty minutes of Chariots of Fire *still brings me to tears. How about the line, "God made me to serve him, but he also made me* fast!*" Where is the kleenex?*

When I watched the English ice dancers, Torvill and Dean, during the Winter Olympics, I did not want to blink, so as not to miss anything. Breakthtaking.

Speaking of the Olympics, I wish that the media would not push nationalism so much, and instead would focus on the events as a competition among inspiring individuals. For a start, we can do without those little medal charts that remind us how many medals each country has won.

The commercials on television during U.S. sporting events are becoming more adept at showing the inspiration of athletics. Like my current favorite, "Bring out your best!"

Until next time, play hard, stay loose, and keep thinking.

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SPORTS AND BEING MALE

A large part of my life has revolved around sports. I love to play and watch many different competitive sports. As I grew up, what it meant to be a man (both good and bad) was connected to playing sports. When the boys got together; we played sports. I have many fond memories of playing football, soccer, baseball, wrestling, and basketball. My father taught the local high school basketball and cross country teams, and when I was in elementary school I spent many afternoons playing at the gym.

A large part of my involvement in sports has been playing basketball. In high school I played on the school basketball team for four years. We would practice five days a week from mid-November to early March, and we would play about twenty-five games a season. At the end of the season, there were playoffs for the championship of the league. My team was one of the better teams in the league and we were always in contention for the championship title, which put a lot of pressure on us to play well. Not only did we (the players on the team) want to win, but our coaches, friends, and parents also wanted us to win. So what we did affected many people's feelings. My last year of high school we won the league title (championship). I also played in summer basketball leagues every summer, which were practice for the winter leagues. This meant I was playing for a team about six months of the year.

My father taught me most of the basketball I learned in elementary school. He was very relaxed about it and never put any pressure on me to learn anything particular or to be "good" at basketball. Everyone else, however, did have all sorts of expectations for me because I was the coach's son. My father managed to convey to me the idea that competitive sports are just a game and that if you lost it didn't mean you were a bad person. The way I heard this was that I wasn't supposed to care about winning, that people who think winnning is important have lost their sense. So what I did was go and play sports and not feel my feelings (wanting to win, disappointment over losing, etc.). I did my best not to let it show how desperately I wanted to do well and pretended that my whole life wasn't wrapped up in how well I was doing in athletics.

My father stopped coaching basketball just before I got into high school, and this confused me. Instead of knowing where I stood, I felt I had to fight for my space. I felt I had to prove I belonged. I no longer felt that anybody wanted me to do well (everyone else was busy trying to get on the team and was competing against me). As a result, I didn't do very well. I was so busy trying to prove myself that I learned very little as I was playing. My teammates seemed disappointed if I did well, for they got to play less and I got the attention of the coach. At the same time they were disappointed if I did poorly because they knew that I could do better and they wanted me to.

The competition was so heavy that I was always forced to challenge myself and play at levels where I more often than not felt incompetent. This re-inforced the areas where I felt bad and left me feeling like I wasn't really good at basketball at all. At the same time I had to take on the attitude that I was better than the people I was playing against in order to have a chance of playing competitively. This left me with no sense that I was actually good in any way.

The summer before my final year of school, we won the championship of one of the summer leagues we were playing in. Our team had only five players, so we each played the whole game. The schools we beat had five or six times as many students so they had bigger and faster players than we did. My team won by playing very well for three games straight without letting up. Each player had to play up to his potential for the whole time. Out of this championship win we got a sense of how good we could be, and we set a goal of winning the league title that winter. We knew that we could do it. During the winter season it often looked like we would fall short of our goal. Players got hurt, and we lost a lot of games. I was personally disappointed because, while I did play some, I didn't get to play in the playoffs at all. We did win the title and I am proud to have been a part of it.

In his article on athletics (**Men** No. 2, p. 27), Kurt Jacobson wrote about times when things "click." He describes these time as times when "for a few precious seconds everything works right, and I am filled with the thrill of being alive." I too have had these times. They can come from a good pass or a pretty shot. It gives me a sense that things are right in the world. These times give me a sense of the perfection of my body and how effortless it is to have things go well. They also contradict my fears by challenging all feelings of limitation. I never know when things are going to "click": it can happen at any time.

I have found a level above the times when things "click" that can last for a few minutes or sometimes a whole half of a game. The thing that makes this level different than when things "click" is that the whole team is involved, and I have a sense that things are going to go right. Each play by the other team or your teammates inspires you to try something more. On this level it doesn't surprise me that things are going the way they are; I expect them to. Playing at this level is pure joy. It doesn't matter who wins.

One thing I learned to do in sports is to "psych out" my opponents. To do this I try to act so confident and relaxed that my opponent decides that they can't possibly be as good as me. It is possible to win an athletic contest just by the way I walk out on to the court or the way I shake my opponent's hand. The real challenge when two equal teams get together is which team can stay out of their feelings. The team that can will win.

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A good part of athletics is that it has taught me to think all the time. Basketball games don't wait while I get a session if I get restimulated. Sports require you to keep coming up with new and unique responses to rapidly changing situations even when things look hopeless or you are scared to death. Part of what makes you create new responses depends on who your opponent is. She can challenge you to do things you haven't tried to do before. For this reason I'd rather lose to someone good than win against someone who didn't challenge me. Often I learn more when I lose than when I win.

When I was playing basketball, I found that I didn't notice the people that were watching me. Sometimes I played in front of three or four hundred people, but I was rarely aware of them. I had to block them out of my awareness or else I would have found it hard to function well at all. Most of the fans didn't really know what was going on, because of their own distress. Most of their cheering was nothing more than clienting and a chance to feel their emotions. For many men, sports is one of the few places where they get a chance to cheer someone whole-heartedly or grieve over a loss. If people didn't feel that their lives were so unimportant I think there would be less of the team- or hero-worship that goes on today. When you watch an athletic contest you do get to share in a part of the players' lives, but this is no substitute for the kind of contact people really need. For a lot of people, being a "fan" is one of the few times they get a chance to feel that they contribute positively in other people's lives, but I think if they were in "better shape," they would find more direct and effective ways to care about people.

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Oppression of Football Players

Last night I had a session in which Ellen Flynn helped me get a glimpse of my power. Encouraged and feeling good from a workshop two days before, I stood up and began to exult, throwing my arms out, then striking a confident posture, by holding my head up straight, my chest thrust up, and bending my knees to relax. Immediately, I became aware of discomfort and pain in my knees from an old football injury (cartilage removed). Within minutes, I was raging across the room, holding on to myself as I shook violently, sobbed cupfuls, and bent over in pain. "They beat me. They made us smash into each other. Every day in the fall for eight years. Every day they carried some of us off with broken bones and torn muscles." I went on into some memories of Marine Corps Basic Training (pugil sticks) and combat in Vietnam.

As the result of that one session, I have a few thoughts I would like to share with other football players and would encourage us to try a support group at workshops. It was the best discharge I have ever had and led directly to the direction, "From this day forward, I will never let anyone take away any of my power."

1. *Football players are oppressed.* **I was slapped and beaten often by coaches (at a Catholic high school in New England and at Harvard College; who knows what goes on in places where they take the sport seriously?). They berated us continuously picking on the most private fears and facts in front of our friends.**

2. *Football players are abused physically.* **Most of us carry scars and bruises on our bodies as well as our minds. Ask us about them.**

3. *We internalize the oppression and abuse each other.* **I tried to hit other men as hard as I could. I often dreamed of killing them by accident. During one game at Harvard a player from another school was killed. He died of an embolism after breaking his leg. I took pride in putting the star player from another team in the hospital with a hard tackle.**

4. *Ex-football players run large corporations.* **Michael Macoby reported a startlingly high percentage (two thirds as I recall) of ex-football players as managers in his study of one company, "The Gamesman"** *not* **referring to their football background but their focus on competition. I believe that football serves the same purpose descibed so eloquently in** *MEN* **No. 2 by survivors of English "public" schools. How else could men, many from working-class backgrounds, so abuse other work-**

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ing-class men as employees, women, developing nations, and the environment if they had not been systematically tortured as children, then given the chance to play out the flip-side role.

5. *Football players are exploited as workers.* In every game I played, somebody charged admission. I was never paid to play, so somebody was exploiting my labor. When you consider the industries built around college football, and in many cases high school football—whether it is the radio, newspapers, concessions, or the billions spent on TV—the exploitation is real.

6. *Football reflects the operation of classism.* Mostly working-class men play football. We Irish, Italian, Polish, and black men suffer the bulk of the mistreatment. Not surprisingly, we least frequently go to the top of the corporate ladder. There our W.A.S.P. (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) teammates more often move ahead.

7. *As ex-football players, our power is immense.* Although I went to Harvard College, Harvard Business School, Cornell and taught for seven years at M.I.T., I have been instantaneously accepted by working-class men in union halls and plants all over the country, even though they were expecting the "professor" to be one of the bosses. How? Three tests I think might be common to working-class men all over the U.S.A. Did you fight? Did you play football? Have you been in combat? The higher up you place, the easier your acceptance. Having done all three, I had to be "okay." I remember once speaking to an auditorium full of Teamsters. No Harvard, no M.I.T. Just, "He's a football player and an ex-Marine. Listen to him."

We can stand up in the tough company of working-class men. We had paid our dues. We have authority in that culture. We should never hide that fact. Nor should we belittle the sacrifices that we and our fellow players have made.

8. *We need to devote ourselves to the protection of our male children.* Never should they be required to break their bodies and learn to smash others in training for the oppressive society. We know it is wrong. We must interrupt this oppressive and abusive practice as strongly as we can.

James Driscoll
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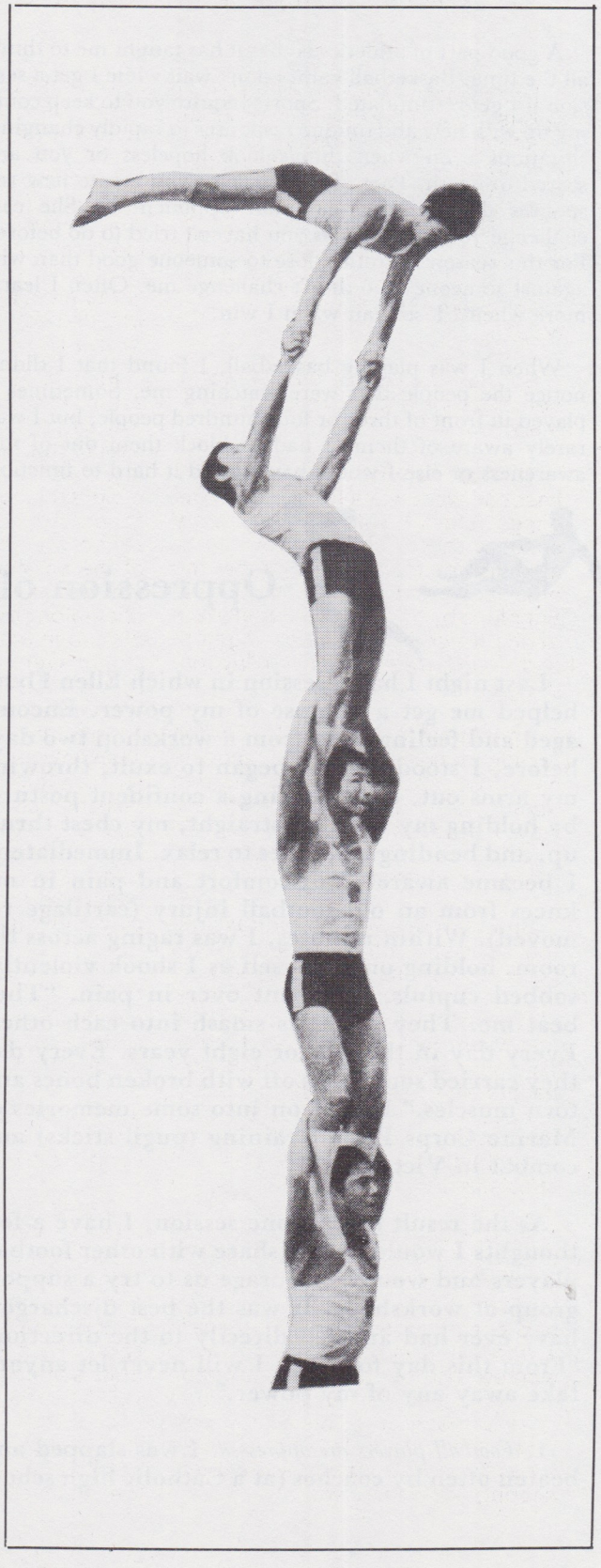

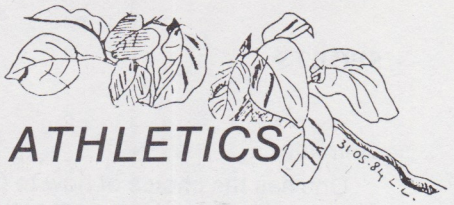

GAINS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS IN ATHLETICS

I have been involved in different sports most of my life, from football, baseball, cross country running, and basketball to badminton, tennis, squash, and racketball. My main sports have been the racket sports. These I played competitively for many years and have the highest level of skill. The others, though, have been important in different ways.

Sports have been a positive experience for me and these are some of the ways.

The team sports like football and baseball were ways to be part of the gang. When I was in elementary school, these sports provided a medium for me to get to know the other boys and strengthen my relationships by having a common experience. Friends did things together and sports was one of our favorite things.

I get great satisfaction from the feeling of mastery of a skill. There is something beautiful and thrilling about hitting a great shot. In one way, it's amazement. How did I do that? In another, it's a feeling of power. I can do anything!

Sports were a vehicle for traveling that I would not otherwise have done. In high school, I played badminton and competed in Canada, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, and California, as well as locally. This gave me a chance to meet new people and see interesting places. In college, I traveled with the tennis team and saw some of the South, Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Mississippi.

All this time together meant many chances to get close to the people on the team. In college I was close to several people on the team. We had a reunion last year and there is a bond among us as a group who worked together and played together. We pulled for each other and cheered each other on. There were times of the usual teasing, but also times of sincere caring and honest sharing about our lives.

In high school, sports were a place for people to mix. In my school we were grouped homogeneously. This was intended to be by academic performance for the convenience of the teachers. In practice it also meant along class lines for the most part. The exception was in athletics. I ran cross country, and I got to meet a wide group of people I wouldn't otherwise have met at school.

Finally, sports were a way to get some respect. For me they were a way of proving myself worthy. This should not be necessary, but at different times it was helpful. It got me included at lunchtime in elementary school for the first time. In high school the "jocks" who thought little of me as a person had respect for me as state high school tennis champion. During college as a tennis pro in the summers, my opinion as a player and teacher was sought by the adults around me. Here I was, the same person who was treated as an ignorant student in school, being seen now as a respected professional. Lawyers and successful businessmen came to me for my expertise. It was a change from the adultism I had had so much of. (Truth be told, I didn't mind the pictures in the papers or the crowds watching me play and cheering for me either.)

There is another side, of course, to this. Sports are subject to all of our distresses, just like every other activity. Sports have been used to divide us against each other as part of the oppression. Men have very early learned that we would be judged by our performance. Playing sports is one kind of performance.

Sports are tied in with the oppressive stereotype of what a "man" is. Lack of skill in sports is harshly judged by the oppression. In addition there is a hierarchy based on it. This hierarchy extends beyond the sports field. When you are "better" than someone at X, you are "BETTER," period.

This is the source of some of the hysteria about winning and losing. We all need to figure out how to discharge on winning and losing. Neither of them are what we think they are ("If you can meet triumph and disaster, and treat both imposters just the same..." —Kipling). Winning is not as good, and losing is not as bad, as we think. Winning and losing are not the issues; it's what they mean to us. They are taken by our distresses and blown out of sight. We could take advantage of sports to discharge on these.

Sports offer us many angles at our feelings. I have noticed in myself and most others that some of the worst self-invalidations I have ever heard come out of our mouths at play. The harshness is shocking. Perhaps individual sports like tennis are unusual in this, I don't know. Maybe it is because there are so many chances to make mistakes where the only one to blame is yourself. It is a perfect opportunity to dramatize disappointment in oneself. I have felt much shame about losing and see it in others. Figuring out how to interrupt this and bring on discharge would be useful. A start is being light and validating. But don't mistake how serious it is to the person involved. These things run deep.

Competition can be useful or harmful. Which way it goes is a result of our distresses. The challenge of another person's expertise and intelligence is the most interesting kind of challenge. It varies in response to us, and we are "matching wits" with another intelligence. My most satisfying matches are those where both my opponent and I played well. I preferred to win, but the losing was honorable. We are not really against each other except as our fears and lack of confidence interfere. Eliminating competition won't eliminate distresses.

I think that a mismatch of abilities is also a challenge, but the challenge is now different. We are in the habit of only trying to win points (games, etc.). Distressed attitudes are widely promoted. "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." This is clearly false and a distorting influence on how we play sports.

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One has the choice of how to play in any situation. One can play to practice the things one knows how to do. One can play trying things not yet securely in one's repertoire to try to extend it. One can play to win every point. One can play as counselor, thinking about how to challenge the other person. One can change from one of these to another and back.

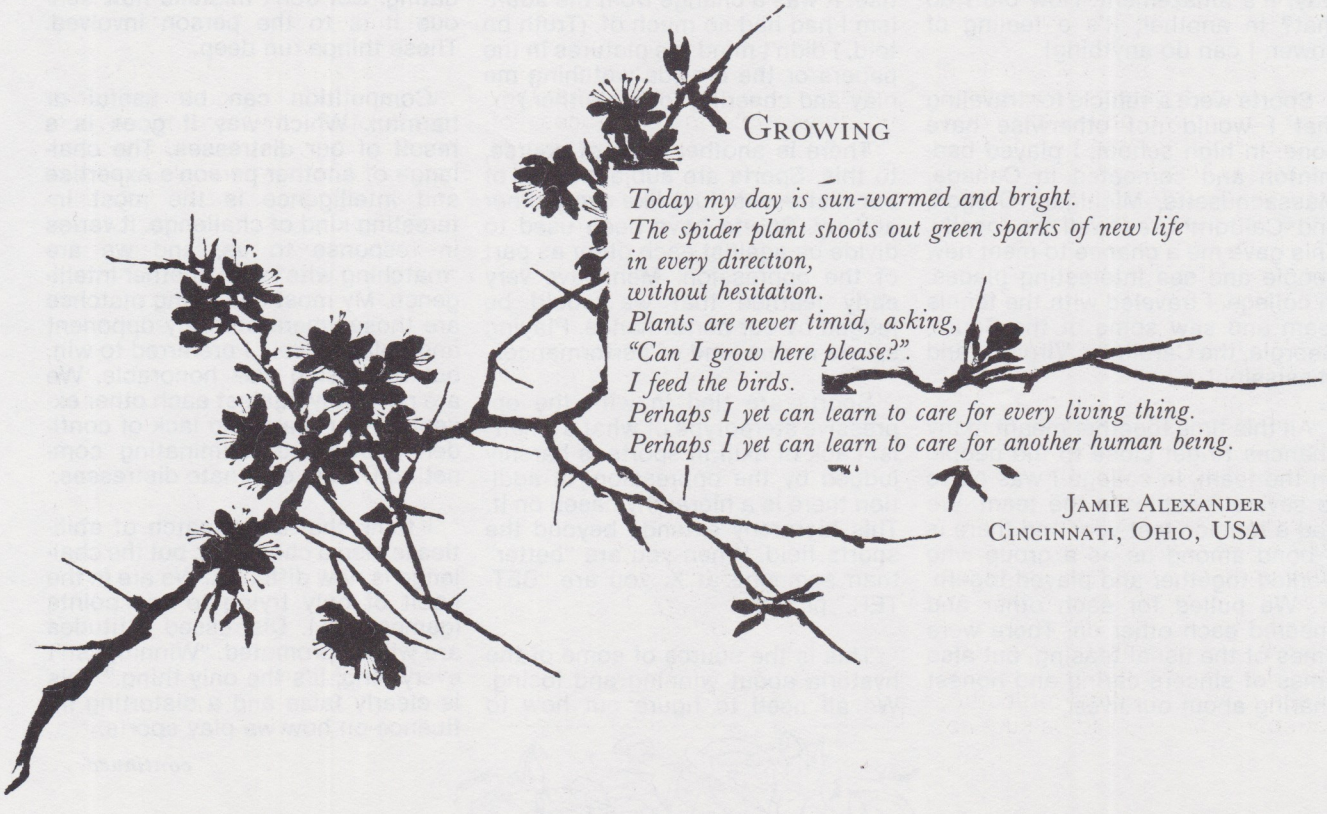
We have seen how effective thinking about each other can be at RC events, where people of different levels of ability are playing together. When the group can be thoughtful enough to allow people to take risks, there is a rapid improvement on the part of people trying something new.

This has been hard for some people to do. I think it is tempting to play out our own experiences of being overwhelmed by older children or adults who were eager to show how good they were at our expense. There is a different challenge when playing with someone not yet as skilled as yourself. You can play just a little above them and challenge them to improve and beat you. It takes skill to do this. You could also practice a shot difficult for you. However, playing with beginners is not the best time to practice blocking shots in basketball. There are all sorts of possibilities, and we will have to decide what to do based on the situation.

It is clear to me that anyone can get as good as they choose at anything. We must recognize that it will come as a result of expending the effort on at least two fronts. One is getting the chance to try something enough with adequate help and information. Another is getting a chance to discharge about it. Lots of feelings get mixed up with sports. Some have to do with our self-image. Some have to do with specific kinds of sports. Some have to do with how we view ourselves when we are trying anything new. It should be no surprise when we find it is yet another route to our chronic distresses.

Here are some ways I've used RC in playing sports. Before I play a match in a tennis tournament, I imagine the situations that scare me. I imagine the ball coming really fast and trying to return it. I use this to help me shake about playing. Or I might imagine lots of people watching me play and shake about it. Another way is to keep my attention off of my distress while playing a match. I don't let any negative thought get a hold and validate myself while I'm playing. Sometimes I shake on the court between points. I also think of directions for myself such as, "I'm only doing this for the fun of it." Or "Eh, what's one more public humiliation."

John Irwin
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
U.S.A.



Growing

Today my day is sun-warmed and bright.
The spider plant shoots out green sparks of new life
in every direction,
without hesitation.
Plants are never timid, asking,
"Can I grow here please?".
I feed the birds.
Perhaps I yet can learn to care for every living thing.
Perhaps I yet can learn to care for another human being.

Jamie Alexander
Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

BECOMING A FATHER

I feel very lucky to have a child. My son is someone I love fully without being careful about expressing it too much. In return, I get forgiven for my mistakes and enthusiastically welcomed many times a day. This looks like a precious opportunity that is going to last the rest of my life.

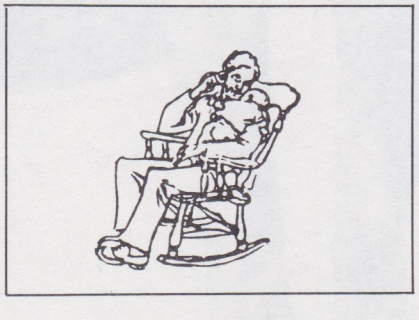
I became a father a year and a half ago, after having spent many years being friend, teacher, and counselor to many young people. I have felt fortunate for this experience of watching other parents' struggles and looking at my own before becoming a parent myself. With this information in mind, I did lots of preparation for my son's birth. I knew that this society is organized to restrict new fathers' access to the first weeks and months of their children's lives. Paternity leave from jobs is still uncommon; many hospitals restrict fathers' access, there is a myth that this is woman's sole domain. I have seen many men, under these multiple pressures, disappear during this time when they have one of the greatest chances in their lives to feel and openly express caring toward another human being.

Luckily in my case I was able to create my own paternity leave from usual obligations and work. Knowing ahead of time that I would have to fight the hospital to stay with my son and my partner, I was able to figure out how to hold him for his first many hours after birth and welcome him the way I always dreamed possible.

I also knew that, no matter how welcoming my partner was toward my participation in my son's first year of life, I had a residue of feelings: that I would be unwanted, that women around my son would resent my active role, that my son would naturally choose his mom over me. I think these feelings come from my father's atttidue that he was the provider in the family but it was my mother who was "close" to the children. I took this to many sessions. I asked myself how I wanted my son to view me. What difficulties that I carry do I want to be sure not to pass on to this new human being? I always came back to the image that it wouldn't be understandable to this little guy why his father felt bad about himself and spent so much time worrying and getting others to worry with him about whether he was good. So I decided to repeatedly contradict this old distressed habit until it was eradicated.

I have decided that every moment in the past is over and deserves none of my attention. The world, including my son, is far more interesting. So I choose and decide to put my attention to the reality that I am loved, love being alive, care deeply for those around me and am making a huge difference right now. I choose to be with my son. As you might imagine, I don't remember this every moment, but my ability to repeatedly make the decision has made a big difference in reminding me that any struggles I feel are old and can be decided against. All concerned have already benefited.

The more I examine society's attitudes toward fathers, the more I am convinced that we have little picture of what rich relationships we can have with our sons and daughters. Part of how men have been oppressed is the assumption that they are dispensible in the process of "nurturing" a family. Most books about newborns talk about the "bond" between mother and child and the supportive role the father can play toward his partner. I think this represents a misunderstanding of what "bonding" is. I know a number of men who have had to take on the role usually relegated to the new mother and have formed relationships with their children that look like the close "bond" that is described as special to mother and child. I think "bonding" actually is the early openness to care fully for another human being who needs us and is fully receptive to our caring. This relationship is available to anyone who is willing to put in the time and effort to care. Every child can use many people in addition to both parents who are this close and thoughtful.



Few, if any, of us have had the chance to express our love fully toward another human being and had it eagerly accepted. The birth of a child can be a fantastic contradiction to this for any person who is allowed to be part of it. Suddenly here is a new person who wasn't on this earth a short time ago. This little person really needs you in order to survive. They welcome every initiative you make toward them.

It is a crime that the way we have been oppressed as men and women interferes with our connection with this new human. During these first few months as new parents this oppression seems to be intensified. For women, the birth of a child is the culmination of all her training to be a mother. When her child is born, she is often left alone with lots of work and little recognition. Further, this is often when society expects her to give up any freedom she has been able to obtain and devote herself to being a mother. Few men have had much experience around infants or child rearing. Traditionally men weren't present at all during this time and often had little to do with children until they could speak. In addition to these obstacles to spending time with our newborns, men often feel awkward and excluded.

I watch very smart women, whose intention it is to give fathers many chances to hold and form their own relationships with infants. I watch male friends who have been eagerly awaiting their newborn exclude themselves from the tender, intimate relationship that is possible because they quickly feel discouraged, awkward, or criticized. This isn't necessary, but to have a

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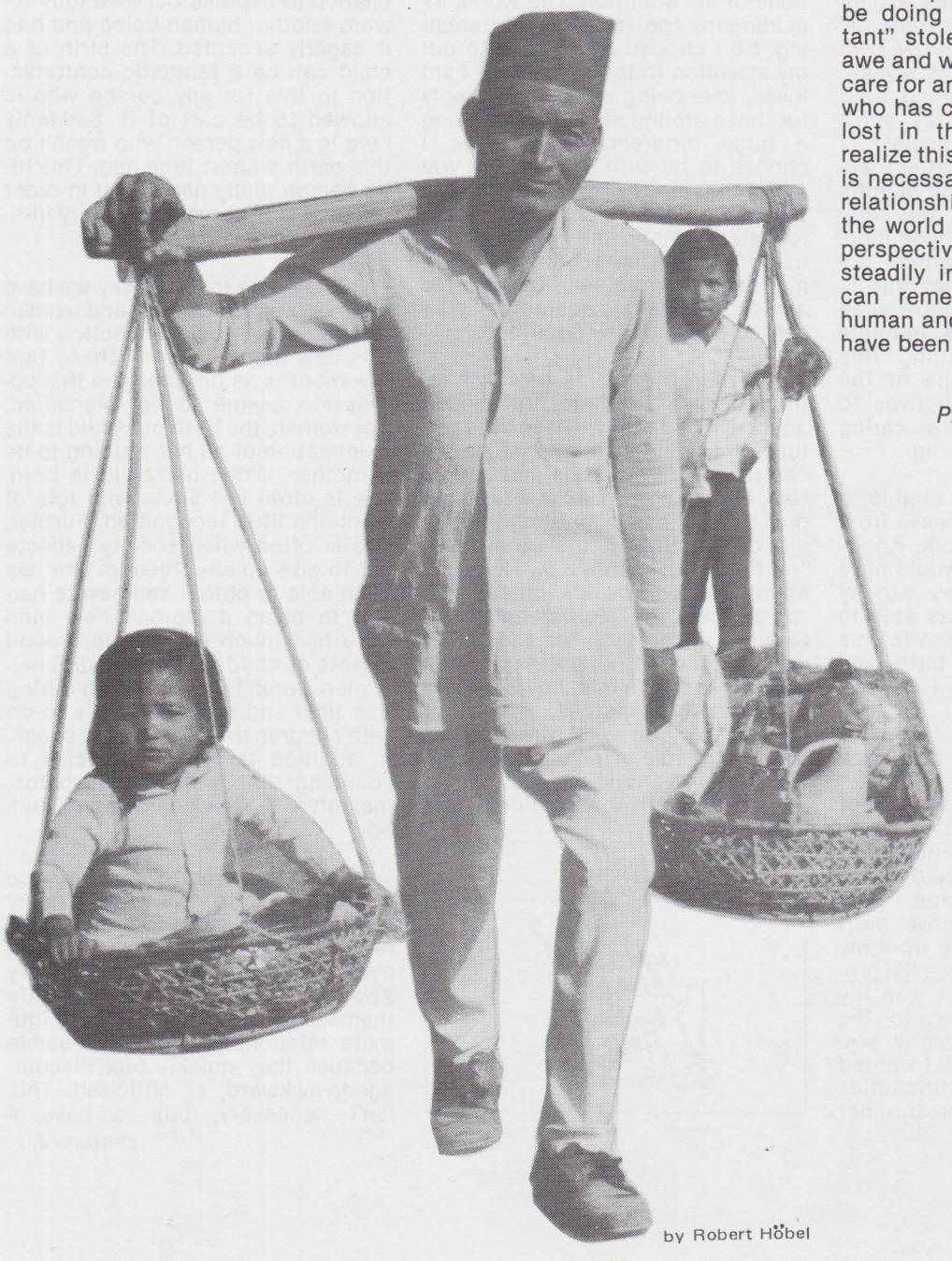
chance at the full relationship that is possible requires some pre-planning and lots of sessions (it looks like to me mostly remembering the feeling of caring deeply) in the first months of the new person's life.

With the introduction of this new person things change radically in relationships also. Time for a couple to be together alone is hard to find and has to be planned far ahead. Even if you are sharing childcare fully, there is more to be done than can be done well. This means that many times your interactions as a couple end up consisting of making arrangements for your little one or trying to beat off fatigue. No wonder it is so easy to be hard on each other and feel distant from your mate in this early period of parenting. This difficulty finding the time to stay closely connected was a surprise to me. Once I realized that it was a natural outcome of not having enough resource, I was able to talk with my partner and figure out how to work on the feelings and find the space to keep our relationship strong.

Part of our policy and program for men's liberation must be to establish the importance of paternity leave from jobs and the full inclusion of fathers in the early lives of their children. Though we do not give birth, we can still get all the benefits of lasting, close relationships with our sons and daughters.

I found that, after the first few months of my son's life, my world started to drift back to normal. Although I spent a lot of time with him, I started to take him for granted. All the small routines of parenting, the feelings of boredom and fatigue, and the pulls that as a man I should be doing something "more important" stole my attention away. The awe and wonder of being allowed to care for and be loved by this person who has changed my life would get lost in the routine. Each time I realize this and take all the time that is necessary to re-establish my real relationship with my son, the rest of the world pops back into a benign perspective also. My goal is to steadily increase the time when I can remember and act as fully human and uncautiously loving as I have been able to be with my son.

Chuck Esser
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
USA



by Robert Hŏbel

PUTTING RC INTO DAY-TO-DAY USE

I want to announce the arrival in our living room on March 3 of Liam Michael Ryan, who was beautiful then and is even more so now. Nothing appeared in the papers, so this is his formal birth announcement. Within half an hour he had been greeted and welcomed by eleven people—Penny, Alex, Mollie, and me, among the most enthusiastic.

In April Liam was very ill with viral pneumonia. He was admitted to the Children's Hospital and spent five days in the babies' ward there. We made sure that a family member was with him the entire time ("family" included some close friends, even one who wasn't in the lucky eleven). The experience was tough on Liam, but for me it was more like an intensification of the normal exhaustion than anything else—certainly there was a lot that was good. Penny hardly ever left the ward, and slept every night within ear-shot, which meant living pretty constantly with the sounds of the desperately lonely little babies.

The best thing about the episode was the way mutual support developed among the parents in our ward (all the regulars except for me were mothers). It happened several times that a number of adults would stand nursing their babies and take turns talking about their lives as parents in general and the hospital experience in particular. This always stayed quite light and spontaneous, and it brought home to me the correctness of Harvey's proposal about support groups: "Encourage each Co-Counsellor to organise 'wide-world support groups' both formal and informal, at every opportunity among the people with whom he or she associates in the wide world..." (*Present Time* No. 49, p. 6).

Taking turns in listening helped people to move on to other actions such as some discreet counselling (by Penny) leading to tears, people picking up babies who weren't "theirs" in benign disregard of the rules, and quite a lot of reciprocal validation of each other as parents (and of course of the babies).

I'm not sure how much this was us putting RC to work, how much was an intuitive correctness by the people there, or how much our modelling was an influence. Whatever, it worked well.

Can Co-Counselling Help?

I want to talk about how Co-Counsellors were able to help during this time, and do some thinking about possibilities there. As in similar situations (similar in that I was putting all or most of my available time into being "on the spot"—my brother's last week alive, Penny's father's last fortnight, the time around Penny's miscarriage last year, and Liam's birth in March), many people wanted to be useful but we had trouble working out how. Useful things people have done include: phone messages and notes of "sympathy" or "good wishes"; offers of time (even when they have been impossible to take up); offers to take on work; coming to the spot and playing it by ear. (A Co-Counsellor came to Ron's funeral. Although he wasn't able to counsel me, his presence was a contradiction to my isolation. I was able to take that to later sessions.)

All these actions "worked"; they've been ways of reminding me that there are people who care and are willing to help whatever distress is being stirred up or laid in. But I sense from some a frustration that they can't do more. The basic challenge in such situations is how to provide effective *precise* counselling.

The offer of time, the *offer* to be counsellor, can be difficult to take up. What does work is to get to the spot (in person, by phone, or even in writing) and just do it. Observe what distress is there, work out how to contradict it accurately, then intervene in that direction as far as circumstances allow or as is needed to produce discharge.

Without turning someone into a client against their will, it must be possible to decide to counsel them and work out when and how it makes sense.

Jonathan
Australia
reprinted from the Southerly Buster
RC newsletter

A Father at a Daycare Center

I will write the story of what has been happening at G—'s daycare center to you, and if you have enough faith in it to pass it on, I won't say no. Here's the story.

At the beginning of the year I started taking G— to a new daycare center. A daycare center is a ma-on in Hebrew, and I will call it that from here out since it is more natural for me.

G— was very excited to go. She was proud of getting to go to school like her brother. On the first day we pulled up and shouted out the car window, "BOKER TOV MA-ON!" (Good morning, Ma-on!) She led me into the building and to the door of the classroom. She opened the door. Out bolted a red-faced young person, screaming at the top of his lungs, who was hauled back into the room by a rather harried teacher screeching, "Mommy will be back very soon. You have nothing to worry about. Mommy will be back. What are you screaming for?" My daughter is one of the most intelligent people I know. She refused to go in.

As it turned out, this unholy welcome proved useful. It set the stage for a lot of fine "goodbye-daddy" work. Long after the other children had been cajoled, plugged, or threatened into quietly accepting being left off in the morning, G— was still at work on it. She'd be relaxed until she caught sight of the boy who'd bolted that morning. Then she'd wrap herself around me and dig her fingers into my ribs like grappling hooks. It was a problem at first. We needed a place to work without a lot of interference from well-meaning teachers. We settled on the wash room. We were lucky that the ma-on and the year were both new. The chaos kept most people from paying any attention to us. Once in a while, a teacher would home in on G—'s crying and come bustling over. Ignoring me entirely, she would try to yank G— away from me, saying something like, "What are you crying for? There, there, Stop crying now. Are you a baby? Come on, I'll give you a cookie. What are you crying for?" I would then put myself directly in between G— and the teacher (having considered this eventuality and positioned myself so I could) and say, cheerfully and casually, "Oh, really, it's all right. She's just telling me how sad it is to say goodbye, that's all. It's really okay." The teacher would laugh a little nervously. But more important, she would bustle out and leave us to finish our time. The fact that I was handling it myself and doing it cheerfully, for heaven's sake, was a great relief to them. None of them particularly wanted another crying child on her hands. It got to the point where they knew to leave us alone in the wash room and were even intercepting the mothers of other children who, drawn by the discharge, were on their way to "rescue" a child in distress.

The young ones at the ma-on were intrigued. Every day a few more would join us in the wash room. They wanted to know all about it: "It's bad to cry. Why is she crying?" "She's crying because she is sad," I would say, "Isn't she good at it?" Then one morning I walked in, G— in my arms, and was brought to a halt on my way to the wash room by ten young people clustered about my legs. We weren't all going to fit into the little room. So I put G— down right there out in the open, and she started to cry. She would try to crawl into my lap, but I would hold her gently at arm's length and tell her she was a fine, strong, beautiful, smart person who knew exactly what to do and that I was thrilled to see her do it. After a while she stopped crying, and I was going to get up and leave, when a brave little girl standing behind me did a marvelous thing. She punched me in the back. I smiled at her. A little boy punched me in the arm. I smiled. A third one punched me on the shoulder. "Gee, are you strong!" I said. He was. That was all the teachers could bear. They had sat watching us intently until then, but at that point one of them jumped up and ran over, saying, "That's bad! That's bad! You're hurting him!" But I just looked up and said, again cheerfully and casually, "Awww, that's okay. Really, I'm a pretty big guy and these are pretty small fists. Actually, it feels kind of nice. Like a massage." The teacher giggled. And she backed off. I got another poke in the back and started to wail, "Boo hoo!" That did it. Soon they were all giggling and punching and I was wailing, and even the teachers were laughing.

It was interesting how G— took to all this. When the other children first started hitting me, she looked shocked. But then she decided that maybe this was a worthwhile pastime, and soon she was in there slugging away with the best of them! The only difference was that she didn't giggle about it. She was being straight out angry.

Every morning we'd play some variation on this game. They started by simply hitting me and giggling when I cried. Then they would hit me and yell, "Don't cry! Don't cry!" when I cried. The giggling slacked off, the anger came on. Soon, they were hitting me and yelling, "You are Phooyah! You are Phooyah!" At which point I stopped crying and started giving them hearty encouragement to be really angry. And were they ever! By this time, G— was walking in on her own and heading right for the crayons. She wasn't interested in the game anymore. But almost everybody else was.

I started talking to the teachers before I'd go. I gave them theory. They ate it up. Not only had they noticed that the children seemed happier and more cooperative, but they had the best recommendation of all: G—. G— is by far the most out, up, and sparkling one at the ma-on. They wanted to know how I did it. I told them. The director of the ma-on became interested. Soon I was giving her theory as well. She loved it.

Recently, they've begun to consult me on their "problem" cases. They were having trouble with a boy who kept splashing water all over the wash room at every opportunity. They wanted to know what to do. I told them to take off his clothes, take everything out of wash room that wouldn't easily dry, and let him go to it. They said no, it was too cold for him to be naked. I suggested a raincoat. And they did it! *They actually did it!*

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They had a problem with a child who would not speak. I watched the teachers trying to get him to talk. While he was playing in the sand box, one of the teachers came over and said, "A—, do you like playing in the sand box? Tell me, A—, do you? Do you like it, A—? Do you like it? Do you? Tell me." As A— had obviously been having a very good time in the sand box before the teacher came over, I sat down next to him and said to the teacher, "A— would like to say, 'Yes, I love playing in the sand box.' He would like to say that very much." This took some control on my part. I had wanted to say, "A— would like to say, 'Buzz off you silly person and let me go back to having a good time.'" But I judged that not to have been the correct response. A— smiled at me, and after that I talked with the teachers and told them that, while it was good that they wanted to encourage him to talk, asking him a question again and again when he wasn't responding could be more frightening than encouraging from his point of view. Ask once, I said, and if he doesn't respond, speak for him. This will show him that you're paying attention to him, that you see what's going on with him. Also, it will help let him know that you like him as he is, that he is fine with you whether he talks or not. That is very important, I told them. He wants to talk. He is struggling with it. If he knows you are solidly on his side, it will help him a great deal.

I have gotten them to put up punching bags for the children. I have demonstrated for them how to stop a tantrum. (That was hard. But I knew that, at present, they were not going to sit by lovingly encouraging a raging child, even if I could get them to agree that it was best to do so in principle, so I decided to show them how to stop the discharge gently and caringly.) And next year, when my daughter moves on to kindergarten, I will probably be on staff there part-time.

W—
CARMIEL, ISRAEL
(IN A LETTER TO JANET BRIGGS,
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA)
REPRINTED FROM PRESENT TIME No. 56

BEING A GOOD FATHER, THOUGH SEPARATED

An oppression I have not seen dealt with in RC literature is that of children and the "access parent" (usually the father) in separation and divorce. I think the rational thing would be for the children to have access to both parents as they need them, and for the parents to work together to make this possible. This is called shared parenting or co-parenting.

Separation and divorce, however, is usually an angry, hurtful experience, and much of the anger is not openly expressed, but can come out in hassles about access. Our courts (and society generally) consider it is fine for a father to see his children one Saturday each week. Many fathers would think this is fine too, and this can be quite oppressive for mothers who have to carry so much day-to-day responsibility. It has *not* been fine for my children or me. It has been frustrating and hurtful and very hard-going.

As an "access father" my oppression comes over as: "You left, it's your fault, what do you expect?" "This is the way things are when parents separate." "Any sharing arrangement is disruptive to a child's routine." "They need to know which their home is, and who's in charge." "Fathers don't usually have much time with their children anyhow." "I never did" (my father).

The oppression works on the children by saying: "You're only a child, you wouldn't know." "The court says so, they know best," or "I know best" (don't think). "It's his/her fault for leaving." "This is the way it is with separation/divorce."

My children and I have had little support from other parents. This issue is very restimulating for most people. I have had lots of support from my children, who are an amazing example of love and persistence. They know what they want.

Counselling on it has helped enormously. Good directions have been: "My children and I are close no matter what happens," and that they have the ability to do whatever they need. It feels right to appreciate their mother and to remember she's always doing her best and loves her children dearly. I feel the way to resolve this is not through confrontation or court battles. I am now taking the direction that she and I can sort this out and that we can really be caring allies for one another. We can do it!

Tony Balint
Sydney, Australia
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56

Reclaiming My Father

The March 12 Eliminating Racism Workshop was exciting and eye-opening for me. It gave me a richer and more hopeful viewpoint for looking at the world, at social change, and at taking action.

There were lots of highlights and insights, but to me the central point was how racism and oppression fit into my family history. I have a clearer view of how to reclaim the damaged part of my relationship with my father and some other members of my family.

Ricky Sherover-Marcuse, who led the workshop, emphasized that racism is a catastrophe, not only for "target group" individuals (blacks, Latinos, and other Third World people), but also for white people. Why? For one thing, it has poisoned family relationships. For children, early on, there is much pain in hearing their loving, trusted parents giving them racist misinformation, in the form of racist ideas, beliefs, and rigid assumptions.

This idea struck home sharply for me. I remember many bitter and painful arguments I had with my father, starting in my adolescence, when I heard him make racist remarks. These remarks didn't fit in with what I was beginning to understand of the world outside, especially what I knew of the civil rights movement, and I contradicted him. This led to many mutual feelings of anger, resentment, and my frustration at his persistence in holding such "stupid" beliefs, which shaded into my thinking he was stupid.

Often the arguments would touch on other figures—Jews, communists—that he also saw as trouble-making groups.

Eventually, after years of these occasional battles we reached a sort of truce by which we agreed to declare certain topics off-limits.

In another part of me, though, I never left him. Once, after I had been counseling on how I felt about my father, I visited him and we launched into one of our arguments. The topic wasn't directly racism this time. We got onto the subject of unions, which is another group my father assigns wide-open blame on, in this case, for corruption, hypocrisy, unfair treatment, and so forth.

Rather than argue with him point for point, as I used to do, I let him tell me his anger at some length with some prompting on my part and only a little counter-arguing. After a while he shifted to the central feeling in all that, which consists of feeling rotten about himself.

He moved from the laying on of blame (i.e., that unions enforce mediocrity, that they limit individual initiative) to that core of internalized oppression. This old recording is the one in which he blames himself for not having enough drive or intelligence to have "made it," that is, to have become a professional.

My father is a retired factory worker. He has worked hard since his teenage years when his father died of black lung. He is intelligent, loving, and kind. He has also accepted the cultural conditioning that tells him it's his fault that he hasn't attained the Great American Dream of moving out of the working class.

I kept telling him that he's not a failure, that he has succeeded as a loving father for our family, that he never gave up. He kept denying this, but not so strongly as he used to; I think some of my remarks were sinking in, partly.

I am convinced that these true statements are what is important to tell my father. His internalized oppression as a worker feeds into the oppressive attitudes he sometimes voices, which have in the past kept us divided. In the past, perhaps, but they can change, and they needn't divide us any more.

John Ascenzi
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 53

Rethinking Circumcision

We will someday look back and think it very strange that in the late twentieth century, boys in many countries were still being routinely subjected to unnecessary and traumatic surgery at birth.

Around the world, circumcision (the surgical removal of the foreskin around the penis) is still performed under a wide variety of religious and hygenic pretexts. The East African Wakikuyu ritually bury the foreskin, the Hove of Madagascar wrap it in a banana leaf then feed it to a calf, and in the U.S., our newborn sons are typically spread-eagled, cut without anesthetic and left to recover in shock and relative isolation after the blood and screaming have stopped.

Circumcision is not exactly a warm welcome into the world—nor is it medically trivial. In the U.S., where the procedure is usually performed in hospitals by skilled professionals, an estimated 227 newborn boys die from it each year.

Those who survive have been hurt at such an early age that it can be difficult to contradict the feelings of powerlessness and betrayal that can result. That the practice is still largely unquestioned and generally tolerated by men is itself some indication of the damage it causes. (I would guess that a similar procedure routinely performed on females at birth would have been widely and vigorously challenged by now.)

If the injury did not come at such an early age, or if the society was not badly confused about sex, or if ear lobes were being snipped at birth instead of penises, the long-range effects of the surgery might be minimal. But under current conditions, the practice of routine circumcision amounts to systematic sexual abuse and seems ideally calculated to produce generations of men who are very vulnerable to confusion in certain areas.

Circumcision is not necessary for reasons of hygiene. Removing the foreskin to keep the penis clean makes about as much sense as pulling out your teeth to keep your breath fresh. Circumcision does not promote a reduction in the incidence of venereal disease, nor does it reduce the risk of cervical cancer in female partners, as was once widely asserted. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups have recommended against routine circumcision.

And although it may be inappropriate to challenge another person's religious beliefs, we should not refrain from providing information that can assist individuals and members of religious communities to draw their own conclusions about which of their traditions should be preserved, cherished, and honored, and which should be cast aside as hurtful. Every religion that survives to the present day seems to evolve by doing exactly this. As far back as 1869, for example, Isaac M. Wise, who many regard as the founder of modern Judaism in the U.S., suggested that circumcision be declared optional for adult converts to Judaism. One would hope that someday newborn infants will be given similar consideration.

The practice of routine circumcision need not continue. It has been eliminated in Scandinavia, Great Britain, France, and other nations. It persists in the U.S. out of widespread ignorance and because of the estimated fifty million dollars income that it produces each year for hospitals and physicians. It will end when the political (and probably legal) pressures require it. Men who are able to use RC to discharge early memories surrounding their circumcision, and women and parents who come to understand its effects, can hasten the day that our sons are welcomed into the world unmolested.

Marty Manley
San Jose, California, USA

Access to Early Hurt

I was reading a copy of **Men** just before people arrived for the class day of my recent fundamentals class and I came across a bit about circumcision. I had a good shake before anyone arrived and was able to have a good session on the pain during the day. That has been a highlight of my counselling over the past while. And the impetus came straight out of the literature. I think I am on the way to having a clear picture of my birth and what happened to me after that. To have this information gives me great confidence, and I'm using the tools of counselling in many different ways outside the Community and the classes.

Brian Smeaton
Ramelton, Co. Donegal, Ireland

Abortion: A Men's Issue Too

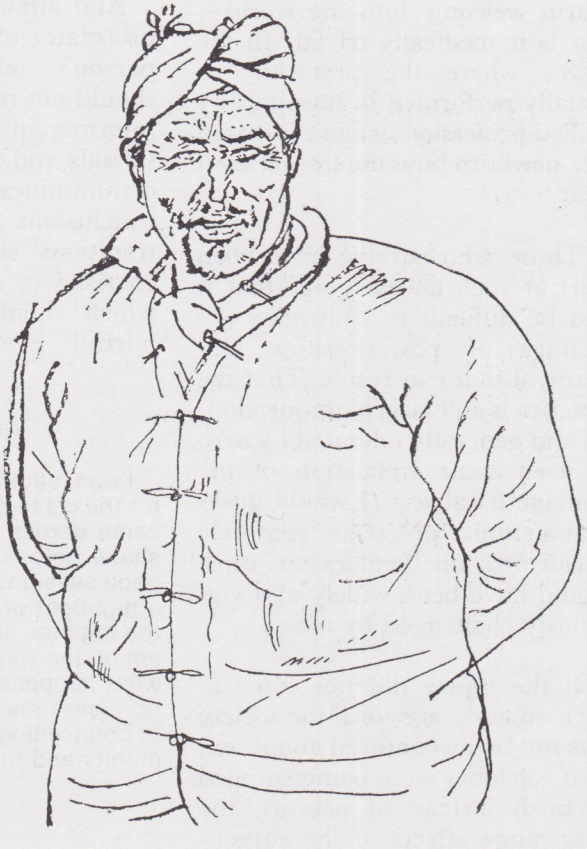
I would like to bring before the Community of men in RC the issue of abortion. Even though abortion is, of course, a woman's issue, and no man can ever be as intimately involved in this issue as a pregnant woman might become, nor is it likely to have the immediacy for a man that it has for the women whose bodies it involves directly, abortion is not an issue that men have nothing to do with.

Shortly after the last issue of MEN came out, I was talking with my friend B— and we began to ask ourselves about the stresses and strains in our relationship. When I suggested to B— that there were certain things that kept me from being completely close to him, he insisted that I tell him what things they were. As he reached for me and held me tightly, I began discharging and talking about sex. I was telling him how stupid and frivolous I thought sex was (as I had told him many times) and the next thing I know I had told him about fathering a child who had been aborted, and that I had never told anyone about it even through five years of Co-Counseling sessions. It had simply never occurred to me that I could talk about it or that I had a right to my feelings about it, which, once admitted, were intense. Thanks to B— I felt very relieved at finally having shared this story with someone, and awe that I had lived under these feelings for so long.

Since that time I have looked for situations where I could bring it up. On the way to a Regional men's workshop I asked my tripmates if any of their partners had ever had abortions and got a startling response. I found it difficult to bring up for a long time, but lately it has intruded into every session. I have found it safe to bring up with both men and women counselors.

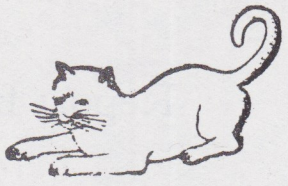
As I explore this in my sessions I am shifting from feeling numbing blame and hatred of my own sexuality and beginning to sort out where my responsibility lies. Certainly it is no great burden to do everything possible to prevent unwanted pregnancy. I recall with much bitterness that I did not extend myself to provide my friend with a choice. The decision she made was not to have a child (which I know she wanted) in circumstances which were unacceptable to her. It was not my place to interfere with her decision, but I could have done something to have altered the circumstances. I could have offered her support in having the child rather than abandoning her to make a choice where there were no real options. I know that I would have experienced it very differently if I had offered to stand by her if she wanted the child.

ANONYMOUS



by Ma Gang

SUPPORT FROM WOMEN



ALLIANCE-BUILDING

I'm very glad to see "On the Appreciation of Men" included in the last **Present Time***—and that there will be more large men's workshops. I like your model of manhood for men—courageous, smart, tender, caring, persistent, strong with the possibility of being tough. I think the theory about societal oppression of men is very important for us women to carry to our wide-world sisters because:*

1) *It accurately reflects the reality of our society;*
2) *It's a further step in our alliance-building with men, an alliance which is not only delightful but necessary for our preservation and liberation of life;*
3) *Realizing that men too are oppressed is another step out of our powerlessness.*

In relation to this, both as client myself and as a counselor for other women, I have consistently found that whenever we have spent time discharging about something restimulating a man has done, it is very helpful and important to then share what we like about the man and how he has been a good ally for us. This is important for it lifts us out of the distress (which we may need to client on as Nancy Kline suggested in the same issue) so we can be our natural loving selves and function better with that man and other men. Focusing on how men have been our allies also is a big step out of our feeling like victims and a big boost to our feeling and being powerful.

Our alliance-building with men, which I expect will be facilitated by our knowledge that men are oppressed and our growing understanding of that oppression, helps us obtain our long-range liberation goals by increasing our numbers, eliminating aspects of our internalized oppression, and giving us a lot of joy-energy for our work.

I also like Doug Miller's article on United Kingdom trade unions and his fine work in them—very helpful.

Pam Roby
Santa Cruz, California, USA
reprinted from PRESENT TIME No. 56

"THE YEAR OF THE MEN"

This morning I read most of the latest *Present Time* again and am still shivering from excitement over the wealth of good thinking, brilliance, and experience of so many wonderful people. It's all so accessible and easily processed information due to the format of the magazine and Co-Counselors' personal, direct style of writing.

I'm particularly encouraged and inspired by the contributions of thinking about men. So many exciting developments are happening with men. Keith Miller said at his recent men's workshop in Boston that he thought 1984 is going to be the "Year of the Man." That's great for all of us. I know my re-emergence as a woman in enhanced by that reality. I see many signs of progress. (1) In my own family where I am actively loving my husband and two sons and I can see some of that caring reflected in their discharging more freely, being more open with their feelings, and thoughtful about relationships. We're doing it, and boy does it pull me out of my victimization! (2) In our Community, we have more men coming in to classes. Jim Driscoll is teaching a class, the men in my classes are loving each other, looking to each other for support instead of just women, and taking their re-emergence seriously. (3) In the wide world, two examples at the Sarejevo Olympics, Bill Koch, the cross-country skier, talked about the importance of his family and his using skiing to push himself to his limits, not to compete against anyone, and Phil Mahre, crying openly after he won the Gold Medal, not because he won the medal, but because he'd just found out about the birth of his child and wanted to be with his wife who was doing all the "work" while he was "playing." Millions of people watched this on TV. (4) At my school I set up a ping pong table and during our lunch break I play mostly with men teachers, lightly and laughingly interrupt their sexism; and they are laughing a lot around me and with each other.

Small examples, but significant ones.

ELLIE MARSH
ALTAMONT, NEW YORK, USA
REPRINTED FROM PRESENT TIME NO. 55

Report from an "Allies of Men" Topic Group

Liberation Workshop led by Emilia Bellone
Riverside, California, USA

We used a discussion group format and responded to three questions. Here are the questions and our responses:

How are men oppressed (remembering that oppression is systematic mistreatment)?

—Men are seen as dispensable (e.g., "we lost five men" and "women and children first").

—Men are not allowed to be flexible; they are pushed into a narrow definition of male. When they don't fit, they are labeled "sissy" and mistreated in other ways.

—Not allowed to cry or be afraid (e.g., "big boys don't cry").

—Physical closeness between men in this culture is prohibited (forbidden, taboo).

—They are held responsible for the status and happiness of the family.

—Males are expected to compete with each other and win.

—The definition of a "real man" is contradictory and not achievable—he must be both a "good family man" and a "swinging playboy."

—Men are blamed for the troubles in society.

—Violence against males is more condoned than that against females (e.g., son is beaten while daughter is scolded).

—There are stereotypes about men that are disrespectful (e.g., men "think with their genitals" and therefore are not responsible for their sexual acts).

In general it was noted that the oppression of boys looks different from the oppression of girls and this difference follows them into adulthood and prepares them for their "role." When they act out this conditioning on one another, it is internalized oppression.

What does the internalized oppression of males look like?

—Feeling he is not a "real man," not okay as a man.

—Not being satisfied with his body image.

—Feeling numb and insensitive.

—Having difficulty being "vulnerable" (e.g., asking for help, saying what's hard, etc.).

—Heavy competition between males.

—Feeling he doesn't know how to take care of children.

—Feeling such heavy responsibility for his family that he is locked into a career and cannot change.

—Feeling like an outsider in his own family.

—Having difficulty expressing love and appreciation for each other.

—Feeling a heavy sense of failure and shame.

—Putting each other down.

—Being serious all the time.

How can we as women be allies to men?

—Interrupting stereotyping of men, standing up for their goodness, intelligence, etc.

—Separate the pattern and the person.

—Appreciate, appreciate, appreciate—who they are as much as what they do.

—Get rid of patterns of being dependent on them; be strong so they can "fall apart."

—Interrupt competition—have them appreciate each other and be loving toward each other.

—Play with them—this is very important!

—Tell them men are not dispensable.

—Turn part of childrearing over to them and trust them to handle it.

—Be available to talk to if they want to.

—Share with them something they like to do and get excited about it. This lets them be excited about it too without having to be "cool."

—Expect them to nurture us.

submitted by Claudette Mouton
Venice, California, USA

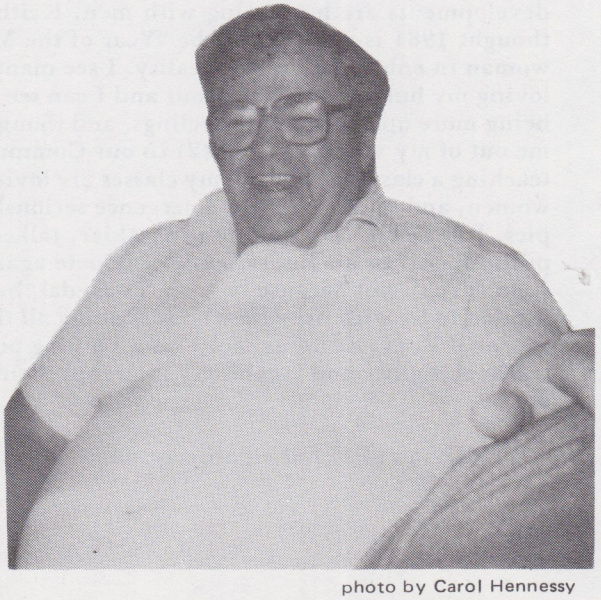


photo by Carol Hennessy

MONOGAMY IS **NOT** IRRATIONAL!

Dear Chuck,

I have never written a letter to the editor before and because it's on an emotionally charged issue for me (as well as for a few other people) I would like to lay out some reassurances both for myself and you. I'm writing about the article in **Men No. 2**, "Discharging Sexual Jealousy," by Anonymous. I'm glad the article appeared—I haven't discharged more rage for so long in a long time. I know that not everything I say in this letter will be coherent. I'm aware that I am still operating under some painful emotion when I write on this topic, although I believe what I have to ask has some rational underpinnings. Please feel free to disregard the more off-the-wall comments.

I would have liked to have seen this article placed among several on the same or similar topics. A major fault that I find with it is its implicit assumption that because sexual jealousy is irrational, monogamous sexual relationships are also irrational. I wish I had the definitive answer here, but I don't, and a good companion to this article might have been an article by someone who had thought and discharged on that issue. It is certainly not a settled question.

It is very obvious that Anonymous has done some important work for himself over the months, but I found the article incomplete. It would have been nice to know what his wife and friend were doing while the author was so busily discharging his frozen needs and earliest sexual memory. Were they discharging their frozen needs and their earliest sexual memories? Was the author's friend discharging the addictive pull to sexual activity that made it seem worth it to risk a friendship? Did the friend discharge on feelings of competition with other men and his own feelings that there is not enough? Did he explore what made it so hard to establish an intimate relationship with a woman without having it become sexual? Did the author's wife discharge on seductive material? What was it that she wanted that made it seem worthwhile to risk her family? How were the children affected? They were there witnessing the whole affair; how were their feelings dealt with? Is the friend now included in the family? Is he contributing child care? Is he contributing financially? Should he? Why or why not?

I have no doubts that all these issues were dealt with by the parties concerned, but all this article gives me a picture of is a victim who worked very hard on himself because his distress was a hindrance to other people feeling all right about themselves.

I'm not sure what I expect you to do with these questions. Consider them seriously, I guess. Respond, I don't know. As you can tell, I'm discharging well off them. If there is an issue in here that you think needs more exploration, I would appreciate your bringing it up as a question in the journal. Thank you, Chuck, for your time and attention. I enjoy reading **Men** very much. As a woman it shows me that I am operating in the world with some strong, proud allies.

Arlene Rosenberg
Rochester, New York, USA

A Woman Ally Visiting A Men's Class

On Wednesday I went to the men's class. Was I ever a hit! I spent time in the beginning telling them everything I could think of that I like about men, especially appreciating their power and in-chargeness. The looks of disbelief were incredible, but I worked out a good way to handle them. I'd say something I liked, then I'd look around and laugh and laugh at their skeptical looks—which of course got them laughing too, and shaking as they started to hear it. Then I'd go on with the next thing I liked and we'd repeat the whole sequence.

I told them about my decision not to accept put-downs of men, and that also helped get through to them that I meant what I'd been saying. I did a couple of good demonstrations of taking pride in being a man, and then we had discharge time in small groups.

We finished up with think-and-listens. I asked what attracted them to RC and was working, and what was hard. The things that are hard included not feeling it was okay to be a powerful man in RC, feeling like "the oppressor," feeling that women are given priority over men in encouraging leadership, feeling that somehow it works better for women—somehow they move faster.

My coming and emphasizing pride, that it *is* okay for them to take charge, and listening to their difficulties, magically enough, made a big difference in how powerfully they approached dealing with the problems. They will be thinking together in the future about what they can do to change things, and reporting back to me. And I said I would gladly come again to their class whenever they wanted me to. I am eager to keep reminding them of how wonderful it is they're men.

For me, personally, doing that class was challenging, hopeful, and scary. The challenge was to stay completely out of my "victim stuff" as a female. The hopefulness comes from seeing those eight men start to reclaim their power, and the realization that that means more powerful allies for myself as a woman. The scariness, among other things, has to do with understanding very well how restimulating in-charge men can be for women sometimes. Actually, I don't think a truly in-charge man is going to be restimulating—my fears are about being a traitor to my sex and about whether I've just encouraged these men to go out and run roughshod over women—we women do need protecting from that, don't we? *No,* we don't; that is what I'm discovering. We need to be seen as equally strong and in charge. Anyway, those fears didn't stop me from taking the approach that is right.

We ended the class with a rousing cheer of "Go, men, go!"

Madeleine Para
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Report of Men Leaders' Meeting with Joan Karp

Present: Joan Karp and six men.

"We are going by the book!" Joan went over Section II of "The Key Points of Emphasis for the RC Communities in 1982-83" entitled Building New Communities Around Homogeneous (All "Wygelians") Groups of Leaders From Every Section of the General Population.

Theme for the evening: "You've got to start someplace. You might need a couple of trial runs. Find some good guinea pigs."

Joan: (1) The situation of men in RC:

—Very good men's work, good relationships, you have each other, you like each other, there is closeness and caring, going in the right direction.

—Open question as to whether men are discharging men's hurts in sessions, whether there is tough counseling on being male. "Hanging out" leads to difficult transition to good counseling.

—Hard to counsel members of own group on distress you share but can slog through.

—Decent number of male leaders and men in RC classes.

(2) The situation of men outside of RC: Who hasn't made it into RC?

—businessmen

—veterans

—working-class men

—elder men

—"straighter" men

Why? Male conditioning around feeling, discharging, and being close is in the way.

(3) Men's work in the wide world:

Does RC and can RC have influence on those groups? There is a snag in wide world men's groups—a tendency to go to the other end of the pattern of being an ally without taking pride in being male. Need to fight sexism without guilt.

What are men's activities outside of RC?
General exchange of information about men's affairs:

R—: Building relationships with men, going slow vs. pulling men into RC.

J—: Finding the balance between kidding around and serious counseling outside of urgency and panic.

M—: Although inside the experience of being male, we know a lot about it. Need to be listened to about the experience of being male.

Joan: Only as a result of working on my internalized women's oppression can I now see how difficult it has been to be male.

W—: Women are having more attention for men. The situation for men in RC is improving. Suggestion: Male leaders counsel women on their internalized oppression and anything in the way of their thinking well about men. Wide world men's movement is booming.

Individual Comments

J—: (1) Set goals for men's fundamentals class. (2) Counsel to develop better personal relationships with men at work—discharge and figure out what type of relationships to have with K— and Y— and with men whom I see every once in a while; (3) being stronger and powerful—not avoiding people's feelings.

R—: (1) Make men's support group a safe place; figure out structure; (2) read Joan's article on leadership and powerlessness and Harvey's on leadership; (3) more sessions on feelings about taking full leadership, challenge feelings; (4) take sessions to feel terror/fear in safe place where can be open about it.

J—: Need to place self in situations which are challenging. How can I set my life up to challenge myself? By being with working-class, young, elder men and men of different races. Establish safe foundation/constituency with Jewish middle-class men. Direction: expect the maximum of myself. Goal: develop a plan and act on it. Check: maintaining forward motion.

M—: Support P— or take over men's support group. What gets in the way of giving P— some rip-roaring sessions? Start a monthly newsletter to let men know what is going to happen at the men's support group. (Joan: important to have one-to-one connections.) Do you get to be open about how terrified you are?

A—: (1) Relationship with housemate and other friend—take them seriously and take charge. (2) Think about theory of men's liberation; study men's policy statement and journals. (3) Do you get a chance to show how terrified you feel? "I'm scared"—light, matter-of-fact tone, connect with others.

W—: (1) Teach ongoing men's class. (2) Do an intro about RC at work. (3) In April, lead men's workshop outside of RC. (4) Plan to lead a heavily weighted to RC non-RC men's workshop. (5) Maintain contact with Charlie and Chuck. (6) Get help as client for discharging chronic pattern of not being good enough. Joan's directions: "Maybe I'm not good enough, What if I'm not good enough, I guess I'm not good enough, am I?" Must look at the doubt and given my parents' recordings that I'm not and never will be good enough.

We will meet again when we are ready. J— is the convener. Invite others.

Report from a Men's Class and a Scandinavian Men's Workshop, Göteborg, Sweden

In spring 1982 we had our first men's class in Göteborg, Sweden, and I'll tell you a little about it. The writing has the form of an interview.

What was the purpose of a men's class, and my own expectations as a leader?

A forum for men in the Göteborg area to discharge, support each other, and work with our patterns as men in a safe and effective way. To take proud directions and to become better allies to women and other oppressed groups.

What happened?

We were a small but enthusiastic group of six men. I was the leader and I had an assistant, Hans Larsson, with me. We met together ten times, once every other week. The group was a combined support group and an ongoing class. I think the group became a breakthrough for all of us.

We worked intensively with our patterns and limitations: isolation, competition, the pattern of "pushing down our feelings," the need for achievement in order to get accepted, the fear of being close to other men, etc. We had long demonstrations, where everyone got quite a long time in front of the group. We had regular reports from our sessions, we had breaks for games, physical contact in a light and playful way. Everybody took responsibility for theory, including doing a demonstration or a circle on some specific topic.

Responsibility was also taken by everyone for activities during breaks. The attendance was high and all of us were very motivated in making fuller use of our resources and in getting the most out of being males and human beings.

People could have done more Co-Counseling sessions between class sessions. I think the safety in a class is clearly affected by one's sessions. It would have helped if everybody had had sessions with all the others in the group.

Practical suggestions

Have regular and frequent sessions (at least once a week). Provide challenges in different forms to every person in the class. The leaders keep thinking about the needs of each person. Demonstrations and sessions "on a light level" can be very effective.

Content

The theory was divided into a number of topics: experiences when growing up, power, relations between men and women, oppression (four-step technique), being allies with women and appreciation of one another.

Thoughts for the future

A men's class is very important both for men and women. It needs to continue as we can see clear and rapid results. We need to get more men into our Communities.

What do I bring with me from the men's class?

More pride as a man, being a better ally to oppressed people, enjoying life more, being more playful, and showing more that I feel close to other men.

After our men's class was over, we had our first Scandinavian men's workshop in Göteborg, May 1982. Charlie Kreiner was our leader and I was the organizer. We were thirty men and the workshop lasted for three days.

Charlie's theory was extremely interesting, especially how small boys get treated and pushed into the role they will then carry on as grown-ups. Charlie's long and intensive demonstrations showed up a lot of this and how you can get rid of all these limitations.

I'm convinced the workshop was of great value to most of us, and we strongly look forward to more men's workshops and Charlie coming back to Scandinavia again.

Ingemar Wetterholm
Göteborg, Sweden

A UNIQUE GROUP

I'm writing to report my successful initiation of a unique Chicago Area men's support group. Included are: significant aspects of our new structure of leadership, highlights of the meeting, and notes about the proposals accepted by the group. The revised proposal details are in the addendum, listed as our Agreements.

Our leadership structure is unique. Although we have a "Teacher Reference Person" (David Jewell), it is each of the members who take responsibility for leading and organizing one meeting. The teacher's job is an oversight function. He reviews the agenda prior to the meeting, monitors the theory presentations, and facilitates whenever necessary.

Each man has committed to attending at least 75% of our subsequent monthly meetings. Along with the expectation of many new members, this ensures an ongoing group. We have established new member procedures that are consistent both with their future meeting leadership and their own comfort.

Our other important commitment involves using tools for sharpening and "flexiblizing" our counseling skills: reading the literature, keeping a notebook on our counseling and our clients, and doing counseling reports.

Our first meeting occurred in David Jones' house in Evanston, Illinois, USA, starting Saturday 7 pm and ending Sunday (Mother's Day) at 11 am (a format suggested by John Moulton of Wisconsin). This format allowed us enough time for introductions for everyone, lots of two-ways, a romp in the park with frisbees, wrestling led by David's young son, and counseling the leader. It flowed! There was lots of safety and respect because each of us had counseled previously with at least two other members.

Chuck L'Heureux
Des Plaines, Illinois, USA

A MEN'S WORKSHOP

St. Nicolaasga, The Netherlands
April 12-15, 1982

With great pleasure I'm sending you this report of a successful Dutch men's workshop.

Writing a report and getting a proper translation took some time, not in the least because some internalized oppression had to be tackled.

Now that this has been dealt with, I, for one, feel that the possibility of Dutch men writing to **MEN** *is more open than before. I will certainly do my share of encouraging them to do so.*

Right now I'm working on an English report of a workshop that was held in the Netherlands in December 1982, to which I'm eagerly looking forward.

Rinze Terluin
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

What follows is mainly a report of the theory that Derrick Rowland, who led this workshop, delivered over the four days in which about thirty Dutch men were together.

After introducing ourselves to each other ("As a man, what are you good at in your life?" and "What did you bring to this workshop?") we formed support groups. When necessary, Derrick counseled men in front of the group to help them to choose the group they wanted. The extra attention led to the formation of two more major support groups, one for Gay men and one for working-class men.

The Fundamentals

Derrick began by reviewing the fundamentals of RC theory. He thought it was important to do so before getting to the specifics.

We are beginning to understand something of how loving, delighted, and rational people can be. We are born with the knowledge that we have control over the entire universe. We lose this notion because we don't get the right information and our discharge is stopped. This is what sets up and reinforces patterns. In a sense, we have needed patterns to survive. "Not feeling" looked like a necessary rigidity needed for survival.

It is not our fault that we behave in pattern, and we can discharge the distress that maintains this. It is never too late for that. We need a loving counselor who represents reality despite the client's terrible stories.

When men have been in RC for a while and get a closer look at their chronic patterns, their discharge often decreases. Shame and guilt over "not being able to feel anymore" can take over, and men feel "stuck." This is often reinforced by the fact that many men have taken women—being the majority of leaders in RC—as models for discharge. So when they stop discharging so easily, they tend to under-validate themselves for that.

What we need in this situation is a loving, delighted, and patient counselor. Don't try to look for quick solutions or "ways out of this situation." Acknowledge that you are "stuck," but stay proud of yourself. This way you'll discharge the fear and shame that keeps you from discharging your feelings openly. Derrick gave us the direction: "I'm a fine example of someone who is completely stuck!"

On Homophobia

An important insecurity for men is how they will be received and treated by other men. We have been treated in violent and otherwise rejecting ways by our fathers and other men. There has been the ongoing demand to be tough, strong, and in control, accompanied by physical abuse and the stopping of discharge. No wonder we are afraid of other men. The most important thing in discharging our feelings about this is to tackle our fear. When we let the fear take over our lives, we get into trouble. Pretend it is not there, contradict it, and discharge it in the meantime.

An important group of men in this respect is that of homosexual men. They are particularly aware of the difficulties in relationships of men with other men. They have experiences with oppression that heterosexual men don't have. Therefore, homosexual men are motivated to a greater extent to get out from under this oppression. This does not mean that heterosexual men have less interest in discharging their homophobia!

Let's Take Back Our Pride!

Our biggest enemies, almost always and everywhere, are shame and guilt, especially towards women. We know it is useless to act out of these feelings. They keep male patterns in place and they keep us feeling powerless. Also, they are of no help to women. Women want men who are proud of themselves and who support them to reclaim their power. We have to stop being afraid to show how powerful we are. Instead of complaining among ourselves about how hard it is for us, it is of vital importance to model powerfulness for each other. In a series of demonstrations, Derrick had us counsel each other by asking one man to model power and confidence and love in say-

continued. . .

continued. . .

ing, "I am a real man." The other man, the client in this case, was encouraged to take on this posture and tone of voice, while discharging whatever feeling came up.

Relationships Between Men and Women

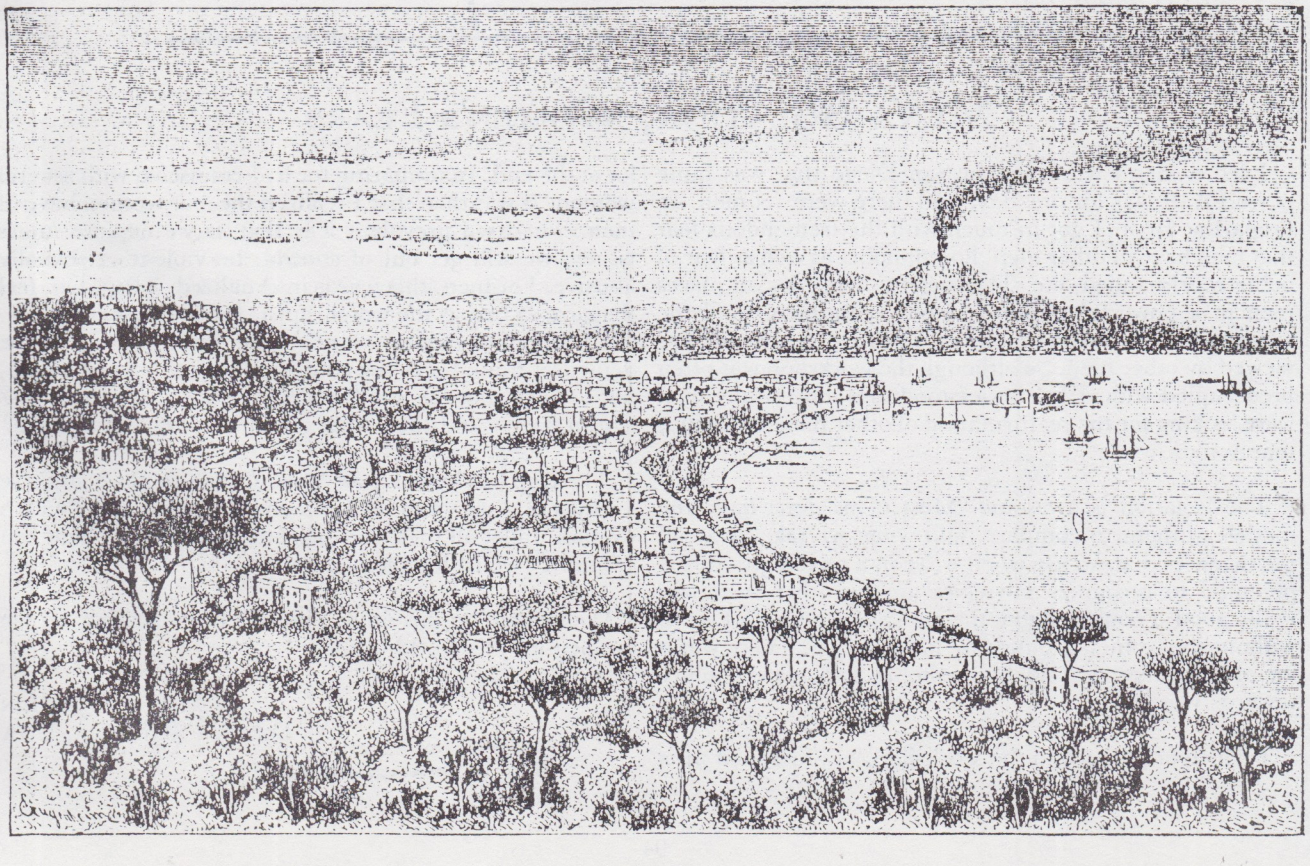
When men start thinking about the ways they were hurt, they may have a lot of feelings about the way women treated them when they were children. Adultism has been a major form of oppression in the life of every man. We have often seen women acting out this oppression, since they spent the most time on each man's upbringing. This does not mean, however, that men are oppressed by women. Many differences between men and women are distress patterns, and the more we realize this, the more we can see the similarities between men and women. We need each other to re-emerge. Men can be the "voice from outside" where it concerns the oppression of women.

Very often the first thing we think of when working on these relationships is sexuality. Almost everything that has to do with sexuality has to do with distress. Try letting women talk to you about sexuality. You will get valuable information. Continue being an ally for women, even when you are afraid. Stop being modest and stop oppression. Fear is no excuse to hold back.

Try asking women what it is like for them to be a woman. Women love to talk to a man who really listens. We still don't have a lot of information, so sit and listen. Support women, especially when they are angry. We have been hurt by women acting angry in a patterned way, but we are grown men now so we don't have to be afraid. Women want to get to know their strength, so encourage them to use it to its full extent. Be thoughtful in how you deal with physical contact with women. Rough contact can be too restimulating, but being too careful comes out of our own distress.

All of this starts with taking back our pride in being men. A good relationship starts with being certain we have something to offer. Show what you have! If you are hesitant about this, not much is going to happen. Show women that you care for them and treat them respectfully. A great way of doing this is showing that you are cleaning up your own sexism.

report by Hatta Smit and Gerrit Koopmans
translation by Rinze Terluin



USE STORIES, USE FANTASIES

At a workshop a man was working in front of the group on sexist oppressor material, "reclaiming his heart," but was having difficulty in getting through to discharge.

Immediately after this demonstration I went to my support group, all men, and found that my own discharge poured forth with the phrase "reclaiming his heart." In the midst of my flowing tears I suddenly recalled that I had never been able to read to the end of the "boy and his faithful dog" stories to my sons when they were small without encountering misty eyes, if not gushers of tears.

I paid some attention to details of what brought the discharge, and this note is written to pass on an approach for getting into those hard-to-reach places for discharge of oppressor material: the literary or dramatic tear-jerker! The inner content of those melodramatic clichés, however routine the format, is really the discharge of the omnipresent oppressions of classism, racism, sexism, ageism, and adultism. The poor boy, with or without his faithful dog, ends up affirming his humanness in spite of all obstacles cast in his way by a cruelly oppressive society! The scenarios for scenes based upon oppressions other than adultism are similar. I often wondered why I was such a sucker for some kinds of tear-jerking scenes in even poor movies or stories when the level of skill or taste in the rest of the production left me totally unmoved. My conclusion is that all these episodes are skillfully crafted distillations of discharge directions for societal oppressions and can offer clues for discharge within counseling sessions.

One of the principal advantages will be getting past the guilt and shame over participation in society's oppressor roles. Everybody has participated in some way at some time, but the connections are so vague and abstracted into customary societal mores that it is hard to break through. The husband abuses the wife (since he has been abused by the boss), the wife abuses the children, the children mistreat each other (more or less in rank order by age and sex), and the littlest child can only kick the dog (poor, faithful beast)! This, of course, is a stereotype of the same order as the most mechanical of tear-jerker scenes, but both are based upon true folk reality.

Application of this same principle is already in widespread use in RC for getting through embarrassment about sexuality when working on early sexual memories: "Make up a story about two little rabbits playing together in a sunny field." Etc.

I shall start experimenting with ways to unlock episodes of "truth and justice ultimately prevailing" that will work for my own buried oppressor material, and would welcome creative ideas from others. Have people already been working in this directions?

Ben Norris
Brooklyn, New York, USA

Men's Isolation, Women's Fears

I led a men's workshop in San Diego that was quite powerful. It was for one day, and there were six men. In preparing for it, I got in touch with the tremendous fear that men have of other men, homophobia as well as fear of being reprimanded, etc. The society, being sexist, places men in a powerful position as our self-esteem (and the self-esteem of women) mainly comes from how we are viewed by other men. So although the workshop was often preoccupied with sex, I understood that most of the men were looking for the reaffirmation of other men as worthy, manly men.

The isolation is awesome. Most of us don't have the models of men, to compare, and when we take away all the defenses that we use when we're in a mixed group, the potential to recognize ourselves among other men was really good. I could tell that the men opened up a lot more without the women around; we loosened up. There was a lot of discharge around homophobia and responsibility towards women.

I felt tight going into the workshop, but loosened up a lot at the end. In preparing for it, I counseled with several women. It was then that I realized the fear women have of men. There's a prevalent fear that as we explore men's issues, we will get out of control, be violent or sexually abusive. For men, this fear is internalized. They, too, feel they are as bad as the worst rapist, for simply having sexual feelings toward a woman. Are these feelings to be denied? I think that's the confusion for me—to be aware, but to deny those sexual feelings it seems is a form of sexism in itself. And then what about homosexual feelings?

The trap has been for an "aware" man to place all these feelings in a cage and then, maybe when he's alone with a woman, to let all these feelings out at one time. That can get pretty weird for the woman.

We worked on this quite a bit. It's been exciting for me to open up this world of men.

Jim Lin
San Diego, California, USA

ROCK 'N ROLL MEMORIES

Six of us met and relived many memories together. I had introduced the group by saying that music plays or has played an important part in our lives, often being connected to good times, "emotional" periods in our lives, etc. We began with a quick round of one record that has only good memories attached to it. Experiences ranged from playing in a skiffle group to favourite records, memorable concerts, and the first time I can remember the Beatles.

Points

1. The striking thing about the group was the wealth of material there was for us, as well as the animated talking.

2. Many of our experiences in life are often related to what record was out at the time.

3. Tastes in music have been used as a way of categorising each other, and liking some records, especially the softer or romantic ones, is not to be admitted to in front of the lads.

4. Rock 'n roll memories can be good for getting your attention out or for pleasant memories.

Colin Hastie
reprinted from the Southern England
RC Men's Newsletter No. 8

MEN AND MONEY

Much of how men see themselves in the United States has to do with money. This includes how much they earn, the worth of their material possessions, their neighborhoods and lifestyles (implying cost of rent, mortage, ownership, upkeep, transportation, availability of conveniences, etc.), and how well they provide for their families.

Men often feel they should be the only "bread-winner." This responsibility can feel heavy. To be a good provider, men will choose jobs on the basis of salary amount rather than liking for the work. Many men have felt trapped by this responsibility.

Men identify success and power with the amount of money they earn and control.

Men keep amount of salary, wages, or income secret. It feels exposing to reveal. Men tend to be competitive about income.

There is a myth that men are more knowledgeable about and can handle money better than women.

Herb Wisch, Bill Van Den Berg, Fred Keller
Topic Group Report
Money Workshop led by Ellen Deacon
June, 1981

DON'T ACCEPT ATTACKS

After reading "Courage" in THE BENIGN REALITY, I wrote down a few thoughts about men and the feminist movement, some of which are, I hope, original thinking.

1. Understandably, but incorrectly, the women's movement has frequently viewed men as "the enemy." This has set up a reactive pattern among many men not involved in the feminist movement. The environment not being conducive to most men working on their sexist attitudes and the attacks from women have made them retrench—re-ally themselves with and give active support to sexist attitudes.

2. Feminist leaders, particularly in RC but also in the wide world, have realized this as an incorrect policy and have denounced it along with some other incorrect policies. It seems to me that when someone begins exhorting this attitude that men ARE the enemy, men are correct in saying, "This is not so." When this attitude is thrown our direction, we can be sure we don't deserve it.

None of what I've said frees us from taking the responsibility of discharging our sexism—we don't in turn get to use this as a vehicle for throwing sexist distress at women. It is merely an attempt at stating (a) what has happened with many men in the face of attacks by women, and (b) a correct policy for male allies with respect to this particular attitude which we run into with regularlity, especially in the wide world.

Jeff Evans
Monterey, California, USA

Report from a Women and Allies Workshop

In December Marjoke Westen and Derrick Rowland co-led a workshop for Women and Allies in "Drakenburgh," Baarn. About fifty women who had previously worked on internalized oppression, and twenty-five men who had attended men's support groups for a while (and had worked on sexism and being allies for women) gathered for four days.

During the first two days the women and the men worked in separate groups, and then joined to work on being allies and on "getting completely close."

In the men's section Derrick began by forming support groups in the way he has found most successful. He allowed us to take a lot of time to decide which group would be best for us. He counseled undecided men, if necessary, in order to clarify their needs and encouraged others to go for what they really wanted. What came out of this were two support groups for men to discharge on becoming completely close to each other, a group for Jews and Third World men, and one for men in committed relationships with women.

It was good to have Derrick over from Derby, England, to lead the men's section. He took time to deal with the first feelings of unsafety and timidity, which made the workshop a safer place for everyone. He also remembered everyone's name right from the start! He presented his thinking clearly and in a calm and confident way and is a great model for all of us.

The first two days' classes were spent on the oppression of homosexual men and on men working on their feelings about other men. This was followed, and sometimes interrupted by, questions and remarks that arose from these themes and the demonstrations that went with them. Derrick did some long demonstrations with a few men. He said that getting to the feelings and staying with them sometimes takes a long time. What we often do is listen to our client and as soon as their despair begins to show, we try and get them away from those feelings. We think we are doing the right job of contradicting distress so it can be discharged, but the result is often that the client ends up not getting help with the distress they presented.

The long demonstration Derrick did with a homosexual man on his feelings of despair and hopelessness made many of us sleepy. After the demonstration there was time for all of us to discharge our feelings and have a good laugh about the general sleepiness.

Derrick urged us to stop talking about "work," when we really mean "discharge." Group laughter and a lot of shaking resulted.

Through most of the demonstrations and the stories that were told, the thickness of the isolation pattern became apparent. Especially in working with men on getting close and trusting each other completely, the roots of this distress came to the surface. After talking about how ongoing criticism and abuse (like the systematic stopping of our discharge) had isolated us from each other, Derrick pointed out that isolation mainly consists of fear, and that fear is the feeling that has to be discharged! A fine direction in this respect is: "From now on I can *choose* to be alone," thereby contradicting the feeling that loneliness/isolation is something we have no control over.

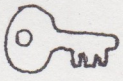
At the end of the first half of the workshop some men asked whether we shouldn't have been working on alliance with women more. Derrick's answer was that we *had* been, even though we had hardly talked about women or discharged our feelings directly connected with them. Discharging our feelings of isolation will help us keep from needing to be taken care of by women.

Later the women's and men's sections joined together. Both Marjoke and Derrick, who cooperated in a wonderful and loving way, talked about what was important for all of us to know about each other. They encouraged us to ask questions and urged us to request demonstrations. In a number of demonstrations the women got a better view of what keeps men apart. After that we all saw what feelings came up when a homosexual man and a Lesbian woman tried to come close. Many of the patterns that got in the way are similar to the ones their heterosexual brothers and sisters carry around.

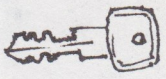
During the last class meeting a mother was invited to talk about what it was like for her to be a mother. It was wonderful to see her move through her despair and feelings of isolation as a mother. One of the ways this was accomplished was by making contact with other parents, both men and women, and talking about what good parents they already are.

I enjoyed this workshop from beginning to end. To me it was the result of a lot of work that has been done in the Dutch Community over the years, now proving successful. Especially—the actual work on relationships between women and men and the breaking down of whatever keeps men apart doesn't stop being exciting.

Rinze Terluin
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
with help from Steve Schwarz of Los Angeles, California, USA in translating



North London Men's Support Group



The North London men's support group has been meeting for about six months now in its latest incarnation, and is going from strength to strength. It has been an important event in my life, and for me to tell its story is to tell of a decisive chapter in my own re-emergence.

The story begins with the last men's support group, led by Lynn Haller. That group met monthly until May last year and was my first contact with the Community after my fundamentals class. Unsure of my skills as a counsellor and as a client, I found it a hard group to go to in the first few months, but it seemed important. The sense of not being alone, of having contact with men and also being exposed to much more experienced counsellors—this was crucial to me in those first months after my fundamentals class when I was beginning to make Re-evaluation Counselling work in my life.

Then there was a summer break. Quite a tough time, which became apparent when I started counselling again at the end of the summer. All my sessions felt dreadful! It was clear that there were some fundamental changes I needed to make in my life, but I was resistant to putting myself through all the unpleasantness I felt it would involve. But at least, I thought, I am not alone in this, because the men's support group will start up again now that summer is over.

I was aghast to discover, however, that no such group was planned. Regardless of feelings of helplessness, I made some phone calls and found that there would be no men's support group unless I did something about it.

Until that point I had avoided responsibility like the plague, having felt failure in some attempts to be a leader in my university days. But, encouraged by my counsellors, and taking time in my sessions to discharge my fear enough to keep thinking about what I wanted and needed, I found myself moving inevitably towards organising a group and being prepared to take whatever responsibility was needed to make it happen. And so it happened. The first session I led myself, assisted by Dave Feintuck. For the remaining sessions (including the day workshop we had in December), Lynn Haller and I made a pact—he would lead the group while I would assist him and take responsibility for all the organisation. This was perfect, as far as I was concerned.

Recently, the group has seemed endangered by its own success. For the group to function as a support group in the way we envisage, it is important that it not be too large and that its membership remains reasonably stable. But the number of men interested has been growing all the time, and I have always been keen that the group be available for new men to join, remembering how important it was to me in the early days of counselling. So we have divided the group, with one half being led by Lynn, assisted by Dave Brown, and the other by me, assisted by Ian Mitchell.

We four also meet monthly prior to support group meetings to plan the sessions.

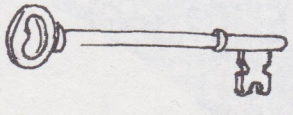
I am excited by this latest development. Not only is it a clear indication of the success the group is having in mobilising support among men, but it marks a decisive step for me in taking charge of my own life. Now it is clear to me that I *can* take action which will have a good effect on my life, and which will even contribute to the lives of others around me. It also makes abundantly clear to me how important it is to be part of a functioning community, supporting and being supported by other Co-Counsellors. None of us can or should be alone in our re-emergence, and mine is being hastened by my own efforts to build the Community the way I want it.

Dennis Stanton
reprinted from the North London Newsletter
London, England

MEN'S WORK IN BOSTON

I'm now an RC teacher. I've got a class of nine guys plus me—all experienced (at least sixteen weeks and up to five years) men. First class was great! Men's work in Somerville and Greater Boston is flying! We've got five male teachers in Somerville—Jeremy Bloch, Josh Goldman, Joel Naguszewski, Alan Epstein, and myself. We're meeting as a group once a month to give each other support and solid kicks. Joel has started a fundamentals class for men, and Joel and I are going to do a combined classes men's workshop in Somerville in April. So, men here are moving!

Mike Markowitz
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



WHY I KEEP COMING

Dear MEN's editor:

These are answers to the question "Why do you keep coming to this support group—why is it a success?" asked of all members of our successful men's support group in Bellingham, Washington.

Jack Kimmes
Bellingham, Washington, USA

The reason I have stayed with the Bellingham RC men's support group is largely Jack Kimmes' leadership in clearly limiting the scope of the group to the discharge of the distress that hinders us in being fully men, and in seeing that the time is never "frittered away," but always used well.

—Tihm Mixon

I come to be in company with other men, who are interrupting patterns of sexism, ageism, classism, and other forms of oppression. To be around other men who are working sincerely on these issues reaffirms, for me, how sensitive, thoughtful, intelligent, and gentle men really are. This gives me confidence and information to work (and play) with in my daily emergence on this planet. The support group also allows me time to work on topics which are so emotionally loaded as to not be workable with women and/or children present.

—Tom McClelland

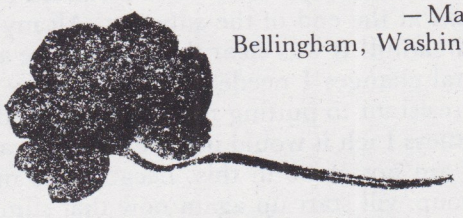
Why do I go to our men's support group? I go to hear the lives and experiences of men, growing up male in U.S. society. In the RC setting I get to hear how men really felt and what they thought when sister teased them, when dad got mad, when they got an award at school, and so on! With this information I can more easily understand what our similarities are and what it means to grow up male.

—Brad Smith

PRESERVE OUR MANLINESS

There is something important about working with all men that has to do partly with being outside of the usual male/female restimulations. Feelings of attraction-sex are not being restimulated. When I am working with women I'm aware of much self-consciousness of wanting to appear and do things just right. With men there is a potential for getting out those feelings. When working with a woman I'm working to get discharge, but there is also a gnawing feeling of wanting her to satisfy the distress rather than help me discharge it. With men those particular feelings aren't present, so I have a chance to be more real in some ways. There is potential for understanding between men that I haven't really felt, but think is possible. To be supportive and sincere, without giving up who I am, is important. It is right not to give up all the "manly" ways that I have learned (like kidding and joking around) in order to be "supportive" because it starts to feel like it's not all right to be who I am now. Having a group of men I can be real personal with tends to rub off on my relationships with men at work. It makes it easier to risk offering support and being personal with them. The support I get in the men's group tends to carry over in terms of my confidence in other groups of men.

—Marty Ruatto
Bellingham, Washington, USA



Rejuvenate Old-Timers

I've begun to lead a men RC leaders' support group. The first meeting was excellent. There were eight of us. We could easily get more men, but I decided to at first get the old-timers rejuvenated. We discharged a lot on getting close to other men. I told them there was "no need to discharge"; the fact that we were together and not dumping on each other as to who's sexist and who isn't should be enough. As a result, people discharged very, very heavily. After the meeting I found myself calling up a woman to talk. I think it must be frightening for me to watch other men discharge anger and also be their counselor pushing them. The potential strength and decisiveness of men is quite awesome. B— reported that her boyfriend came home feeling sick. She counseled him and he discharged heavily. The effect of such a safe atmosphere caused all the men to re-think what potential support there is from other men. So it's an exciting experiment for me too.

Jim Lin
San Diego, California, USA

MAN AND PRIEST

BEING IRISH

In a recent class I gave theory that dealt with a quick broad historical perspective – people always having done the best they could to manage with the information they had – slavery, feudalism and capitalism, and now what next? I then spoke a little about the different ways oppression is laid in – the different approaches necessary for people who are oppressed and those who were the oppressors – with reference to Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Then I emphasised the importance of taking pride in being Irish and what a great history we have of surviving and triumphing. After that everyone had time looking at their roots. We ended up with a good session where everyone appreciated everyone else.

Three people came from Belfast for the day. That is one of the things about RC here in Donegal. We cover a lot of miles for sessions. Each week Sandra and I do about a hundred miles driving for sessions, and it's paying off. The first Community meeting is arranged for next Friday week here and there will be five people at it. Already there is news about a number of others who are interested.

FAMILY

I spent a few days on an island off Westport (called Clare Island) with my son J – and another friend. One of the conditions of the trip was that my friend Michael did not drink alcohol. This was good for him. I have also made a commitment with Sandra that we both take time with each other every day and that makes a difference to our relationships. We both realise more clearly the importance of keeping our thinking sharpened up and working at keeping our relationship clear. It is not easy having two unemployed teenagers about the house, plus ourselves and Sandra's mother-in-law, but we manage remarkably well. I want to work more on my adultism and sexism.

MY WORK

I was asked to join a diocesan committee to prepare a report for the next Diocesan Synod on "Nuclear Warfare" (their words, not mine). I am reading the Church of England report "The Church and the Bomb" at present, and next Saturday the research officer for the Role of the Church Committee (the most senior committee of the Church of Ireland) is coming to see me to talk about nuclear arms and other things. I am planning out how much I will listen to him and the kind of information I will share with him. On the telephone he agreed that people need more and better information. Lots of people I am listening to at present are very much against the whole business of nuclear arms. There is a big debate about abortion in Ireland and people are beginning to realize that there is much more in this than passing a few laws prohibiting abortion. I also have a more or less steady spot on a local radio channel to speak about whatever I want. I find this an excellent way to keep up with my own writing and thinking. The art of getting the thinking, words, and actions together is something I am working at hard and it is paying off well.

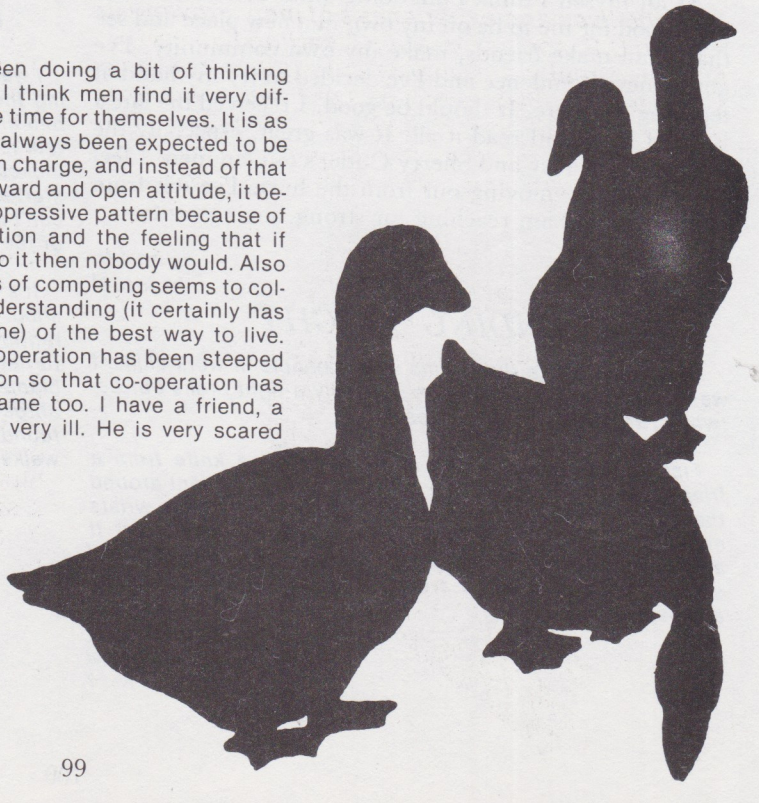
My work in the parishes is going well. I spend a good deal of my time with young people, encouraging them to speak out and to respect their own thinking. I am in touch with a friend in London and later in the year I am hoping to develop a plan for work around here, and he is willing to come over and add his expertise. He is a man I used to work with when I was in Belfast. I have committed myself to drawing up a plan for work within one month and sharing it with a number of people. I am also thinking about how I could arrange to teach a course in one of the local educational institutions based upon the people who might come to it deciding what they themselves want to do with the time. I am thinking about how to make a plan for that. It is good to hear that in different parts of Ireland in some educational establishments people are thinking along these lines. I am also in touch with a counselling resource group in Belfast who want to extend their activities to this part of the world. They use some of the tools of RC, and I have made a good friend of one of the members of the group. He is a good man.

MEN

I have been doing a bit of thinking about men. I think men find it very difficult to take time for themselves. It is as if men have always been expected to be strong and in charge, and instead of that being an upward and open attitude, it became an opppressive pattern because of the expectation and the feeling that if they didn't do it then nobody would. Also the business of competing seems to colour their understanding (it certainly has coloured mine) of the best way to live. It's as if co-operation has been steeped in competition so that co-operation has got a bad name too. I have a friend, a man, who is very ill. He is very scared and tells me so, but when it comes to dealing with the medical people about his case (nobody is quite sure at present what is wrong with him) he cannot tell them that he is scared and they treat him as if he was trying to make trouble for them. I rang yesterday (he lives a good distance from me) and said that I would drop everything and go to him, when he said he needed me. That helped him to decide to make a plan about how to get the best out of his treatment during the next week. I will go to see him next week and together we'll see how we can turn his treatment into a co-operative effort where people, especially the medical people, can say to him, "I don't know what to do, but let's try this together." One of the things that has gone against him is the way the doctors tell him things that he knows are not right for him, and then they get annoyed with him if he won't follow their instructions. That is when things get competitive.

I went to a men's day in Belfast led by Joe Harris. It was excellent. We worked on roots again. Joe got us to write down our family tree concentrating on the men in it, and that brought up loads of discharge. In the afternoon we used the method of one person attracting another, and that was explosive. Men expressing their attractiveness does break through lots of put-down feelings. We hope to do another day before the summer workshop so you'll see lots of attractive men in Dublin in August.

Brian Smeaton
Ramelton, Co. Donegal, Ireland



Feeling at Home Abroad

I thought I'd write a bit about men here. I've gotten to know a few who are special to me through my work and through counseling. I feel their warmth and brotherhood. It's like we are more together than apart or different as husbands or career people. I guess I have always had feelings that I am classified by career, then by race, then by sex,...and so on. With these men we are able to cross these lines. One of them, Alex, is a man I have known for eight years. He has a tremendous sense of humor, always cracking jokes, laughing at them before they even come out of his mouth. This is a great asset to have among a group of serious mathematicians. I remember going to lunch with the director of the Institute I belong to here in Israel. The director was very formal, making sure to treat us "with the respect due to professors." Alex kept making the silliest jokes, scorning the classism.

I've also gotten to know a counselor named Avi. He is an extraordinary man. He has difficulty with English, probably has had difficulty understanding RC theory because of the language and yet he is a brilliant teacher of RC. The statement "the way RC was taught to you is not the way RC is taught" so much exemplifies him. Above all, he is his own man, and this makes him a great counselor, sincere in his directions, openly loving. Through him I got a glimpse of how counseling can be used everywhere. In Israel things like **The Human Situation, The Upward Trend, The Benign Reality** are not yet translated. Basic theory for the most part is communicated only in words. In Israel, in his class a great deal of time was spent reading the Manual illustrating each point along the way. Not so much material is covered, but it is covered well. People get a concrete grasp of what counseling is about by modeling more than by reading theory. It's powerful.

As for myself I think I am doing quite well here. It has been good for me to be on my own in a new place and see that I can make friends, make my own community. I've gotten new confidence and I've decided to try my hand at teaching RC here. It should be good. I received the latest issue of **Men** and read it all. It was great, especially the article on jealousy and Sherry Cutler's talk on men. I feel like I'm slowly moving out from the hurts I've felt from other men and am reaching for strong, loving contact.

Jim Lin
in Israel

ENDING A FIGHT

I work in a place that trains young people in work skills. I was chairing a meeting, when suddenly a fight broke out between two of the male trainees.

Fists flew, and then one of them pulled a knife from a friend's pocket. He said, "I'm going to get you." I went around the side of him, trying to avoid the fists. I grabbed his wrists and said confidently, "You don't have to use that—put it away." I had to hold his wrist quite firmly. He looked at me and said, "Oh yeah, here you are—he's not worth it." I certainly avoided bloodshed.

Richard Field
Bristol, England
reprinted from Southern England RC Men's Newsletter No. 7

WORK WITH BOYS

I started work last October as a "researcher" with an organisation that runs clubs for boys. They have asked me to evaluate what they do with boys. So my work has provided me with opportunities to talk and think about men full-time. I am writing an article for the next issue of Southern England RC men's newsletter about men as workers. I am being asked to work with men all over the place, setting up quite a network with men working with boys, and at last making the impact I have wanted on the "anti-sexist" approach. I have also been approached by BBC TV "to be involved in a programme about men"; I'll have to wait and see about that. My inclination is to avoid it like the plague, but I'll have a look.

Trefor Lloyd
London, England

CARPENTERING

Work goes well. I have decided to make a commitment to carpentry for the forseeable future. My work is excellent. I was recently put in charge of a project turning a single-dwelling unit into a duplex. My fear of the work itself dwindles, as does my fear of getting close to the guys I work with. I have not yet joined the union; that is one of the things that's been temporarily swallowed up by my confusion. I have been talking union a lot with my coworkers, to find out how they look at it. The next steps will come to me, I know. The main progress I've felt lately is that I'm *really talking* and *really listening* to the guys I work with, and that's for sure a step in the right direction. Your thinking has been helpful in this area.

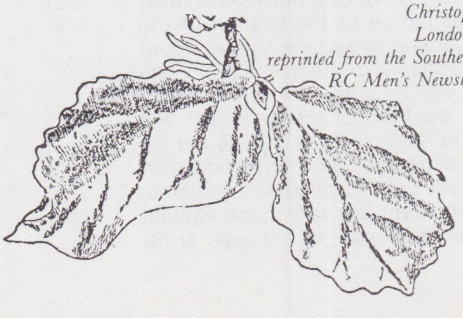
MAC PARKER
BURLINGTON, VERMONT, USA

Directly Interrupting Sexism

I went into the fish and chip shop and there was a man abusing the woman behind the counter. I went around in front of him and put myself between him and her and said, "You can't talk to her like that." He was quite a big man too, and then he looked at me, moved so that she was again in his vision, and started to abuse her again. I stepped up again and said, "You can't talk to her like that," and I slowly edged him back and out of the shop.

It's the second time I've done that. I did it at our local flower shop: there I counselled the man! I went in and this man was ranting at the woman and I stopped him doing that and he turned on me. I said, "I can see you are upset, but you can't blame her—it's not her fault." (It turned out he had been living abroad and had returned and was very disappointed at what he found.) In the end, I insisted we leave the shop together and I walked down the street with him.

Christopher Spence
London, England
reprinted from the Southern England RC Men's Newsletter No. 7



WINNING IN TOUGH SITUATIONS

I'm about to graduate with a Ph.D. in biochemistry with special interest in Neuroscience. I am writing my dissertation at the present time. Receptor proteins bind neurotransmitters and allow the nerve to fire. Several years ago my advisor purified a membrane protein from the synaptic region of rat brain which we believe is the receptor for the amino acid glutamate when it acts as a neurotransmitter. My work has been the chemical characterization of a similar protein from cow brain. The work which I have done has been excellent and important and I am very proud of it. I am equally proud of my ability to stand up for myself as I have moved through the program. One of the persons on my orals committee had lost out in an appeal which I made to a faculty meeting. I knew that he was carrying hard feelings so I met with him and validated him a lot. The result has been tremendous support from him since then. Another time my advisor and I had a disagreement. He started yelling at me; I was able to be counselor and be there for him as he got some of his feelings off.

I am most proud of my work in the Lawrence RC Community. It has taken a long time to get free of my entanglement with the Community. I think that the reason it has taken so long is that the women leaders have been so powerful that I have bought into their apparent view that I am "fatally flawed." It was too much like the original sin of my childhood. I would get shut down and was not able to use my most powerful tool, my mind. My way out has been through men's work, including two Charlie Kreiner workshops. The last three years we have had a men's group here in Lawrence, thanks to me. It is now a powerful group and I've been appointed to lead it. At a recent introductory lecture there were eleven new men and two women. That is a real change here where most of the men who have come into the Community have been men friends of the women. My crowning achievement in the Community was a relationship counseling session with one of the powerful women leaders, no third person. We did well.

How did I make it? (1) No matter what else was going bad for me, I have never stopped counseling, at least once a week, for ten years. (2) I knew that RC theory worked. I used it with children two years before Andy arrived on the scene. (3) At some point I understood the importance of loving the RC leadership even if it was treating me incorrectly. (4) I live RC theory; I apply it in all areas of my life.

LeRoy Chittenden
Lawrence, Kansas, USA

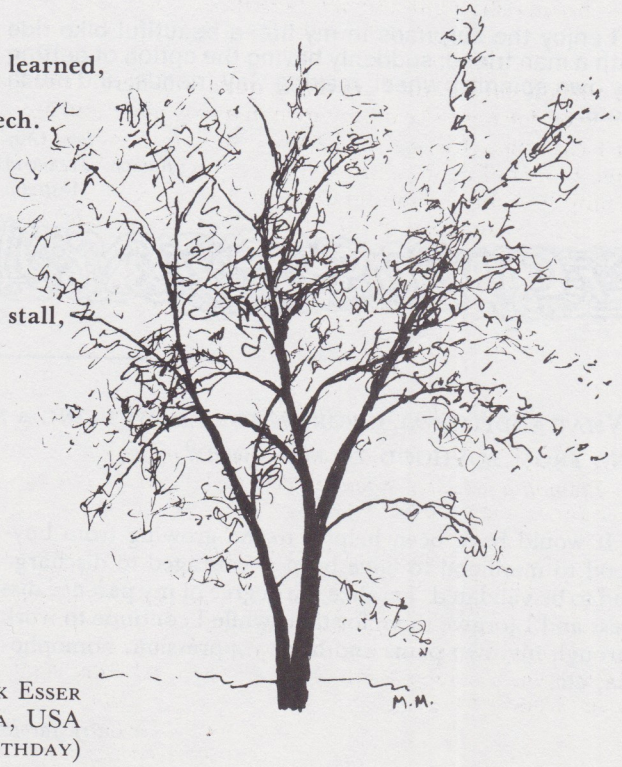
To a Lovely Elder Sister

Seventy years is a long old time
In current reckoning ways
But to those like you, still in their prime,
Birth seems like yesterday.

Born to parents proud and stern,
You've grown to towering heights.
Though arts of home and house you've learned,
You've never lost your might.
You've gained a love of words and speech.
You now sway friend and foe,
To tackle things beyond their reach
To stretch themselves and grow.

Mistakes you've made, but so have all.
Just leave your worries behind.
From first to last you've been forced to stall,
Now the real you you can find.
All human beings have their doubts,
But love is your solid core.
If you forget "I'm good" to shout
I'll write it on your door.

"What's left to life?"
Your friends might bawl.
I can hear your answer true.
"For me, I dream of trying all,
I'll grow until I'm through."



Chuck Esser
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
(For Helen Hardin's 70th birthday)

MEN IN ADVERTISING

Alan Epstein and I are just starting a men's RC class in Somerville (combined new and experienced RCers—five of each). I continue to be active doing men's work in the wide world. I gave a two-hour discussion/lecture last week to 200 people in Worcester on stereotypical images of men using a slide show of men in advertising that I have helped to develop. I've given this workshop about twenty-five times all over the Northeast USA and the requests are coming in to do it one or two times each month. For the third time, my roommate and I are teaching a course on men and sexism for men at the local adult education center. I've started to try to package this course to human service agencies as an in-service for male staff.

Mike Markovits
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

Answers to the Questionnaire in **Men** No. 2

What do you most enjoy about being male?

I enjoy the surprises in my life: a beautiful bike ride with a man friend; suddenly having the option of getting my own spinning wheel; making Gay friends; and much more.

John Gray
Railton, Tasmania
Australia

Loving women. There is a special poignancy about being close and touching a woman. For one thing, whatever I can be, whatever I can do, I can never be a woman. For another, the kinds of contacts which surround sex have a special tenderness for me—there can be a new human life created.

Second most enjoyable is freedom of movement, especially freedom of thought, knowing that I can reach anywhere mentally and know anything.

Christy Lanzl
Houston, Texas, USA

What additional information about being a man would have been helpful to you in growing from boyhood to manhood?

It would have been helpful to me growing from boyhood to manhood to have been encouraged to discharge and to be validated. I realize the degree of my parents' distress and I forgive them for that, while I continue to work through my own pains and hurts, oppression, homophobia, etc.

Barry Jacobs

To know that it's all right to cry and to be close to people and to be optimistic.

John Gray
Railton, Tasmania
Australia

Answers to the Questionnaire in **Men** No. 2 *continued...*

WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED IN THE RC COMMUNITIES AND THE ATMOSPHERE IN THEM TO MAKE THEM MORE INVITING TO MEN?

It would be nice if women RC teachers knew how restimulating it is for some males to have women teachers. Most of us were in primary schools where all or most teachers were female. Some of those teachers acted as if they hated men and dumped their feelings on boys.

It does not work to simply tell men counselors to work together. Specific male-male antagonism needs to be worked out. In counseling reports, men often need to be asked how it feels to discharge with another man and to hold hands. Also, don't abandon men when we feel like leaning on a woman. The elegant interruption is to get another man; often a woman can move effectively to make the introduction, due to men's hesitance at asking for help.

For women clients working on sexism with a man counselor, it is courteous to be as sensitive to oppressive income or age differences as she expects him to be about gender differences. For example, a young person who is male may seem oppressive to a woman, yet still be oppressed as young. This is especially true around eighteen or nineteen years of age.

We need to be more aware of oppressions around work and age. Sometimes women counselors act as if sexism is the most important oppression, which everyone should work on first.

In general, I think that interrupting oppression is more effective when invisible: the interruptor does something, the interrupted starts thinking, and is appreciative for the assistance.

It's nice when women ask men for sessions, instead of the patterned reverse.

Knowing that people are discharging on early sexual memories makes it easier to cope with couple restimulation in dyads of one man, one woman.

CHRISTY LANZL
HOUSTON, TEXAS, USA

More *doing*. Men are conditioned to *do* and are discouraged from sitting talking. They find it hard to sit and listen to women talking. Organise bike rides, craft evenings, infiltrate the local auxiliary fire service, write together, and make music together. Ease yourself and other men into "talk only" sessions. Don't say "that's his pattern," "he just can't talk." Get his attention out by sharing an activity.

John Gray
Railton, Tasmania
Australia

APPRECIATING **MEN**

I ran across a copy of **Men** No. 1 recently. I found it has clear statements on sexism that would be helpful in our men's group, both to focus points of departure for our own discussions and to supply, in a supportive sense, an idea of what other men have been expressing. Our group is not an RC one, though a few of us have been involved with RC.

I would like a bunch of copies. Please write as soon as possible and tell me where and how much; also what other publications you have put out.

Mike Russo
Clintondale, New York, USA

I thought **Men** No. 2 was exciting. What a range of men's experiences, especially the "Latino Men Speak" and "Reflections on Military Service." I liked seeing so much of our men's newsletter in print. It made me realise how much good work we have done here as men.

Trefor Lloyd
London, England

First of all, let me give you a big hurrah! for MEN. A male friend from Australia arrived in my home a month ago with copies No. 1 and No. 2 and passed them around my communal home. The magazine has given me a lot of encouragement to be clearer and straighter in my communication with everyone in my life, but especially with the men in my life. I'm so glad MEN is in my life. Two articles that especially spoke to me were "What Women Need from Men" and "Close Friendships Between Women and Men." Both of them have helped me and my mate to deal with changing our relationship from one of lovers to loving friends. The articles have also helped me in establishing from the start groundrules that I think will change my relating to men in my life generally.

BEV SIDEBOTTOM
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
CANADA

I just discovered your magazine for the first time the other day. It is superb! Would you please send me information on how I can obtain all current issues of the magazine, and also subscribe.

FRANCIS BAUMLI
COLUMBIA, MISSOURI, USA

Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

The person who learns to Co-Counsel well in a Fundamentals Class can become part of an existing community of Co-Counselors locally which has close ties with other such communities in many parts of the world. Co-Counselors in these communities share many ongoing Co-Counseling activities.

MEN
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